Blood

H. H. Ewers

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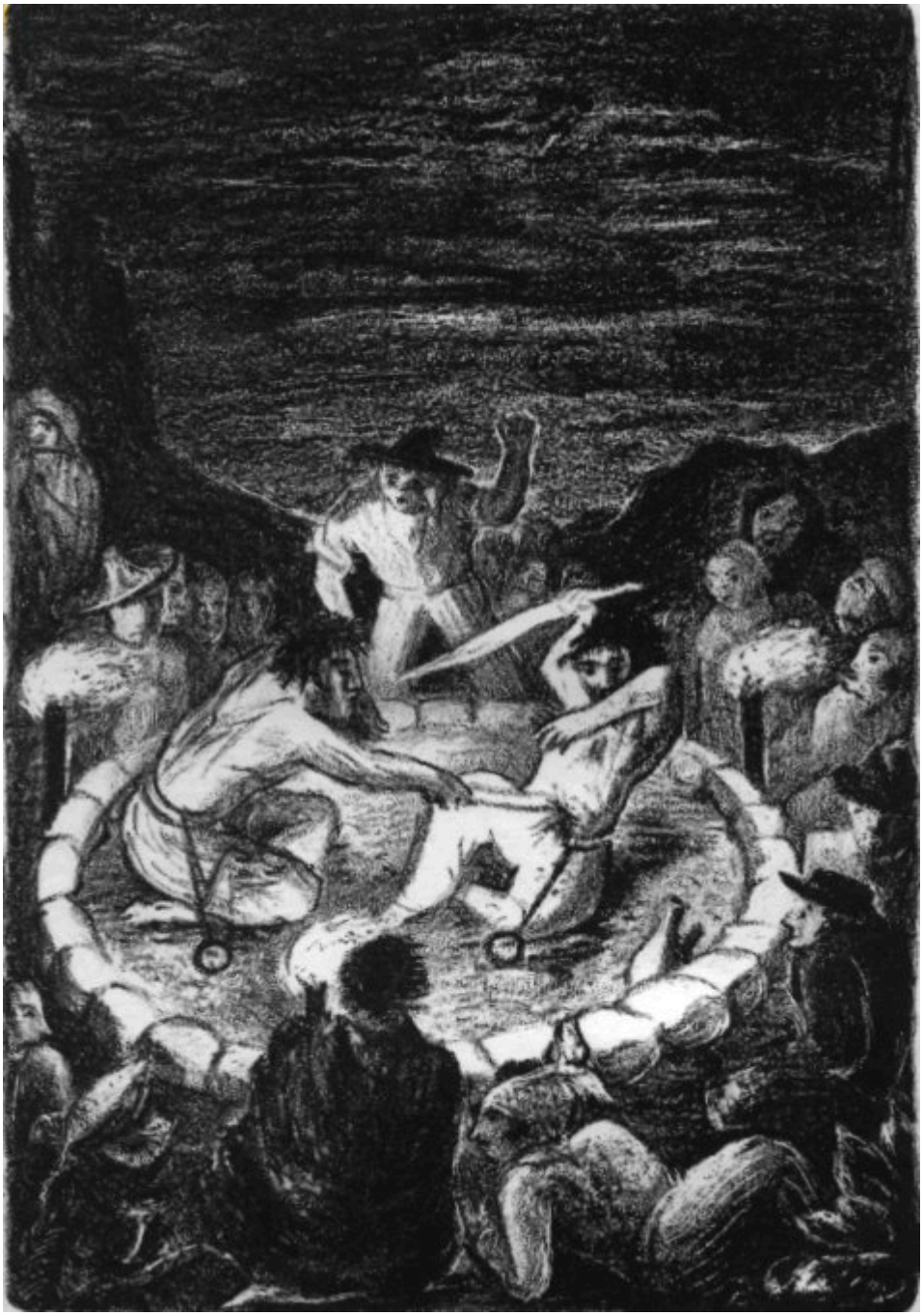

«ἡ φύσις δαιμονία, ἀλλυθεῖα ἐστὶ.»

Aristotle, De Divinatione, cap. II

Blood

Lithographs by Edgar Parin d'Aulaire
I received the following letter:
Petit Goaves (Haity),
August 16, 1906.

Dear Sir:
YOU see, I am keeping my promise. I shall write down everything as you requested, from the very beginning. Do with it as you wish, only don't use my own name for the sake of my relatives. I would like to spare them another scandal; the previous one was a sufficient strain upon their nerves. Here, as you desired, you will find, to begin with, a very simple story of my life. I came here as a young man of twenty years, to join a German firm in Jeremie. You know that the Germans have almost the entire colonial trade in their hands. The salary tempted me—one hundred and fifty dollars per month—and I saw myself already a millionaire. Well, I went the way of all young men who come to this loveliest and vilest of all countries on earth: horses, women, drinking and gambling. Only few are able to tear themselves away; I myself was saved only by my strong constitution. There was no thought of getting on; I lay around for months at a stretch in the German hospital at Port-au-Prince. At one time I did an excellent business with the government; at home, to be sure, they would call it an incredibly impudent swindle. There they would have me in jail for three years; here I rose to high honors. All in all, if I had received the punishment provided for by the German statutes, for what I and the others did, I would have to live five hundred years to be a free man again. But I would gladly serve them if you could point out to me one man of my age in this country who has not an equal score to account for. To be sure, even at home, a modern judge would have to let us go scot free, for we all lack a consciousness of our acts: on the contrary, we look upon our deeds as not only permissible but extremely honest.
Well then, with the construction of the pier at Port-au-Prince—which, of course, was never built—I laid the foundation of my fortune; I shared my booty with a few ministers. Today I own one of the most successful

enterprises on the island, and am a very rich man. I barter—or swindle, as you say—with everything imaginable, live in a beautiful villa, promenade in marvelous gardens and drink with the officers of the Hamburg-American liners whenever they call at this port. Thank God, I have neither wife nor child. You, of course, may call the mulatto bastards that run loose in my courtyard my children simply because I begot them —may the Lord keep you and your morals!—but I don't. In fine, I feel excellent.

For years I had a miserable nostalgia. Forty years I had been away from Germany—you understand. I resolved to sell my entire holdings for better or for worse, and to spend my declining days in the old country. When I had made my resolution, my longing became suddenly so strong that I could hardly wait for my departure. As a result, I postponed the sale of my property, and with a neat sum of money tucked away, departed helter skelter to spend six months over there.

Well, I stood it three weeks, and, if I had tarried another day, the district attorney would have had to provide shelter for another five years. That was the scandal I referred to above. “Another Case Sternberg,” the Berlin papers wrote, and my highly honorable family saw their name printed in bold face underneath it. I shall never forget the last interview I had with my brother. The poor man is privy councilor! The face he made when I assured him quite innocently that the girls were at least eleven and possibly twelve years of age! The more I tried to whitewash myself, the deeper I got into the mire. When I finally told him that it really was not so bad and that here in Haity we prefer the girls even younger, else we would have to be content with sickly specimens and not virgins at all, he stroked his forehead and murmured: “Be silent, wretched brother, be silent. My eyes look into a cesspool of indescribable filth.” For three years he raged at me, and I secured his forgiveness only because I bequeathed to each one of his eleven children a considerable sum, and also because I sent him a monthly allowance for his sons. For this he includes me every Sunday in his prayers. Whenever I write him I never fail to mention the fact that another young lady of my neighborhood has reached the convenient age of eight and has enjoyed my favor. I ask him to pray for me, old sinner that I am. Let's hope it helps! Once he wrote me that he had to struggle with his conscience to accept money from such an incorrigible man; often he was about to send it back: only his consideration and pity for his only brother persuaded him to keep it finally. But now, suddenly, the scales had fallen from his eyes, and

he knew that I had been always joking. For now I was ninety-six years of age and for that reason incapable of similar misdeeds. But he begged me insistently to refrain from similar jokes in the future.
I answered him; here is a copy of my letter, which I, as a good business man, kept:

"My dear brother:
"Your letter has deeply offended my pride. Under separate cover I am sending you a package of the bark and leaves of the *toluwanga*- tree, which an old negro provides regularly for me every week. The fellow claims to be one hundred and sixty years of age—well, he certainly is a hundred and ten. In any case—thanks to the excellent extract prepared from this bark—he is the stoutest Don Juan of the entire countryside, barring only your brother. The latter, incidentally, is still quite sure of his natural prowess and uses the precious solution only on rare occasions. For this reason he is readily able to grant you part of his store and guarantees its prompt effect. The day after tomorrow, in honor of your birthday, he will arrange a small banquet, and on this occasion he proposes to outdo himself, which is a general practice on memorable days. At the same time he will drink to your health.
"Enclosed, as a little extra for the coming Christmas, find a check for $3000 (three thousand dollars). With my best regards for you and yours, I am,
Your faithful brother.
"P.S. Please inform me if you remembered me in your prayers on Christmas."

Probably my good brother had another serious battle with his conscience, but eventually Christian pity for me, poor sinner, must have conquered in his heart. At any rate he kept the check.
I really don't know what else I should tell you about my life, my dear sir. I could tell you a hundred little adventures and jokes, but they would probably be of exactly the same nature as you heard from every white man, when you traversed our country.
As I re-read this missive, it occurs to me that three-quarters of what I had intended to be a *curriculum vitae* is devoted to the theme "woman"; —well, that probably is characteristic of the writer. After all, what interesting thing could I have said about my horses, my merchandise or my wines? And poker I gave up a long time ago. In this village I am the only white man,

aside from the Hamburg-American Line agent, and he plays no more than the officers of his line who occasionally call on me.
There remains woman—what will you?
So, now, I shall place this letter in the booklet which is to contain the notes you desired of me, and of which I still have no idea myself. Who knows, then, whether you ever will get it, or if you do—perhaps in an empty booklet?
I salute you, kind sir, and am,
Yours very truly,
F. X.
The letter is followed by these notes:
August 18.
AS I open this empty booklet, I have a feeling as though something new were entering my life. What? The young doctor who visited with me for three days made me promise to investigate a mystery and embark upon a strange adventure; a mystery which, perhaps, does not even exist, and an adventure which may be alive in his imagination only. And I promised so lightly—but I am afraid he will be disappointed.
To be sure, he surprised me. Five months he strolled around in this land of ours and knows it much better than I myself, even though I have been here for fifty years. He told me a thousand things which I had never heard, or else which I had heard and put aside incredulously. Probably I would have paid as little attention to his stories, if he had not extracted from me, by his questions, all kinds of things which were never quite clear to me and which suddenly appeared to me in an entirely new light. And yet, I would have forgotten all that presently, if it hadn't been for the little incident with Adelaide.
What happened? Well, the negro girl—she is the most beautiful and the strongest of all my servants and really my favorite ever since she came into my house—was laying the tea table for us. Suddenly the doctor interrupted the conversation and looked at her attentively. After she was gone he asked me whether I had noticed the small silver ring with the black stone on the thumb of her right hand. I had seen the ring a thousand times, but had never paid any attention to it. Had I seen another one like it on another girl's hand? Well, perhaps; but I could not remember. He shook his head thoughtfully.
When the girl came once more to serve tea on the verandah, the doctor

without looking at her, hummed a few notes; an absurd melody with a few stupid nigger words, none of which I could understand:
Leh! Eh! Bomba, hen, hen!
Cango bafio te
Cango mount de le
Cango do ki la
Cango li!
Crash! The tea board lay on the stone floor, cans and cups shattered to pieces. With a shriek the girl ran from the house. The doctor stared after her; then he laughed and said:
"I give you my word, she is a *mamaloi."*
We chatted till midnight, until the steam siren called him back on board ship. While I took him back in my boat he almost succeeded in convincing me that I was living like a blindman in a most extraordinary world of horror, the existence of which till then was utterly unknown tome.
Well, I have sharpened my eyes and ears. So far, nothing odd has occurred to me. I am very curious to read the books the doctor proposed to send me from New York. As a matter of fact, I agreed with him perfectly when he said that it is a shame that, in all these years, I haven't read a single book about this country. I didn't even know that such books existed: I never came across one at the house of a friend.

August 27.
ONCE more Adelaide is away for a week to visit her parents in the interior. She really is the only native girl in whom I ever noticed such a pronounced attachment to her parents. I believe she would run away if I did not give her the desired vacation. For days before she is quite unbalanced, and when she returns, the sorrow of parting always works so severely upon her that she actually breaks down under the strain of her duties. Think of it: a colored girl! Incidentally, I have searched her room during her absence; quite methodically. I prepared myself for the task by reading up on it in a detective story. I found nothing, absolutely nothing suspicious. The only one of her possessions which was not obvious from the very beginning was a black, rounded, oblong stone, lying on a plate bathed in oil. I think she uses it for massaging; all these girls massage their bodies.

September 4.

THE books from New York have arrived; I want to start reading immediately. There are three German, three English and five French works, some of them illustrated. Adelaide has returned. She is so miserable that she had to go to bed immediately. But, I know her; in a few days she will be all right again.

September 17.

IF only one-tenth of what these books contain is true, it is really worth while to pursue the secret which the doctor thinks is so close to me. But these travellers simply must make themselves interesting, so that one copies the rankest idiocies from the other. I am really such a blind ass that never, in all these years, have I noticed anything of the entire voodoo cult, with its veneration of the snake and its thousand human sacrifices. A few small things did occur to me occasionally, but I never paid any attention to them. I must try to remember everything which might have some connection with voodooism.

Once my old housekeeper—I was living in Gonaives then—refused to buy pork in the market. It might be human flesh, she claimed. I laughed at her and reminded her of the fact that she bought pork all year round. “Yes, but never at Easter-time!” I could not convince her, and had to send another girl to the market. I have also seen these *caprelates* quite frequently—*hougons* they are called in this vicinity—decrepit old men who sell *wanges.* These are small bags with shells and multi-colored stones which are worn as amulets. They are divided into distinctive types, such as “points” which render men invulnerable; and for women there are chances which secure possession of the naked body of the beloved. But I never knew that these swindlers—or rather, these merchants—are a kind of low clergy of the voodoo cult. Nor did I ever realize that many foodstuffs are taboo for members of the cult. Thus Adelaide never touches tomatoes or *aubergines,* nor will she eat the meat of goats or turtles. On the other hand, she has often said that the meat of a ram is blessed, and blessed also is the *maiskassan,* her beloved corn-bread. I also have learned that twins are greeted with jubilation everywhere; there is always a family banquet when a woman or an ass gets *marassas.*

But, good Heaven, the story of human flesh on the market is certainly a fable; as for the rest, it all seems utterly harmless to me. Small superstitions; where on the entire earth won't you find something similar?

September 19.

SO far as Adelaide is concerned, the doctor seems to be right after all, provided that his knowledge is not simply book knowledge. The Englishman, Spencer St. John, does mention a similar ring; it is supposed to be worn by the *mamaloi,* the priestess of the voodoo. Incidentally, I will confess that this term and the analogous one for the chief male priest are in much better taste than I would have believed these niggers capable of using: *papaloi, mamaloi*—in their corrupted French the *loi,* of course, stands for *roi,* or king. Can you think of a more beautiful title? Mother and queen—father and king. Does not that sound better than privy councilor, as my God-fearing brother calls himself? I also found mention in the books of the stone which I thought she used for massage. Tippenhauer, as well as St. Mery, knew it. Wonderful! I have a real god in my house; the fellow is called *Damtala!* In her absence I inspected it; the descriptions tally absolutely. It is obviously an old, marvelously well-sharpened axe of the time of the *caraibs.* The negroes find it in the forest, and, unable to explain its origin, think it is a god. They put it on a plate and believe it knows the future and talks by rattling. To keep it in good humor, it gets an oil bath every Friday. I find this utterly charming, and my secret priestess pleases me more from day to day. To be sure, there are still secrets to be fathomed—the doctor is quite right—but there is nothing horrible about it!

September 23.

NOW, in my seventieth year, I am forced to realize that it is well to educate yourself in all fields. I would never have had that charming adventure I experienced yesterday if I hadn't studied those books.

I was drinking my tea on the verandah, and called for Adelaide, who had forgotten the sugar. She did not come. I looked in my room, in the kitchen; she wasn't there, nor were the other girls. Moreover, I could not find the sugar. As I walked through the foyer, I heard murmurs in her room. I rushed to the garden—her room is on the ground floor— and looked in. There my pretty black priestess was sitting, wiping the stone with her best silk kerchief, putting it back on the plate and carefully pouring fresh oil over it. She seemed very excited; her eyes were full of tears. Carefully she took the plate between two fingers, at the same time extending her arm. Then her

arm began to tremble, slowly at first and then faster. Naturally the stone began to rattle. Adelaide talked to it but, unfortunately, I could not understand a word.
But now I am getting somewhere. Fine! The doctor may yet be satisfied. And I, too; for, fundamentally, this is flattering to me. That evening, before dinner, I went to her room, took the talking stone and sat down in my easy chair. When she came in to remove the plates, I quickly put my newspaper aside, took the plate and poured fresh oil over the stone. The effect was remarkable. Crash! went the tray, an habitual occurrence at such moments. Thank God, it was empty this time. I motioned her to be still and said quietly: “Friday! He must have a fresh bath today!”
“You want to ask him?” she whispered.
“Naturally!”
“About me?”
“Of course!”
All this came about very conveniently; now I would certainly learn her secret. I waved at her to leave the room and to close the door behind her. She obeyed, but I could plainly hear her waiting outside and listening. Now I made the god clatter to its heart's content. It skipped about on the oiled plate so merrily that it really was a joy to watch it. The clacking mingled with Adelaide's sighs from behind the door.
As soon as I let the thunder god subside and put down the plate, she slunk in again.
“What did he say?”
Exactly! The devil, what did he say? He clattered, and nothing else. So I remained silent.
“What did he say?” she insisted. “Yes, or no?”
“Yes.” I said, making a wild guess.
She was jubilant. *“Petit moune? Petit moune?”* In the Haitian Creole this stands for *petit monde,* which means “little world,” or rather, “little child.”
“Naturally, *petit moune,”* I repeated.
She jumped around the room, hopping from one leg to the other.
“Oh, he is so good, the dear thunder god! He told me so, too. And now he must keep his promise since he pronounced it twice in one day!” Suddenly she became quite serious again. “What did he say, a boy or a girl?”
“A boy,” I answered.
At this she fell on her knees before me, crying and sobbing again and again,

almost swooning in her joy. “At last! At last!”

September 28.
I KNOW that Adelaide has loved me for a long time and that she wishes for nothing else so much as a *petit moune* from me. She is jealous of the other girls whose brats run around in the courtyard, although, God knows, I don't bother with any of them. I think she would love to scratch their eyes out. So that is the reason why she treated the thunder god so nicely! Incidentally, tonight she was particularly charming, and it seems to me that I have never had so sweet a colored girl. I believe I actually like her a lot, and, so far as I am concerned, everything shall be done to fulfill her little wish.

October 6.
IT is scandalous that I, as a good business man, have never kept account of the extent to which I have contributed toward the betterment of this wretched people. Apparently I have always greatly underestimated my cultural achievements. Today I brought the statistics up to date; it was not very difficult. You know, my thumb has three joints and this is said to be hereditary. In other words, anybody in the village with three joints in his thumb is certainly one of my offspring. In connection with this I made an amusing discovery, so far as little Leon is concerned. I always took the mulatto boy for one of my progeny, and his mother, too, swears to this. But the brat has only two joints in his thumb. Something is wrong here. I suspect handsome Christian, one of the Hamburg-American Line officers; he must have competed with me. As a matter of fact, not less than four of my offspring are missing. Some say they ran away years ago; but nobody is able to tell me anything definite. It is really so unimportant.

October 24.
THE clatter-god was right. Adelaide is bewitched, and full of a honeymoon tenderness which is almost disquieting. Her pride and her joy seem contagious; never in all my life have I bothered about the progress of a future pilgrim on earth; while now—what's the use denying it?—I find myself keenly interested. On top of that comes the closer relationship which has sprung up between Adelaide and me. To be sure there was some resistance and hesitancy, as well as much weeping and coaxing, until I finally won her entire trust. These blacks certainly can be silent if they want

to; what they won't divulge you can't get out of them even with red-hot pliers.
Here, again, a particularly happy coincidence provided the means whereby I forced her to remove her last mask.
Adelaide has no parents after all! I learned it from an old woman by the name of Phylloxera, who has weeded my garden these past years. She is a shrivelled old hag who lives with her great-grandchild—a dirty, lousy brat—in a tumble-down shanty in the neighborhood. Once again the little scamp had stolen eggs in my house and faced a severe whipping. Then the old woman came to beg me off. In return she offered me information about Adelaide, since, of course, she too had noticed in what high favor Adelaide stood. And her information—I had to swear by all saints that I would not betray the old hen—was really so interesting that I gave her an American dollar on top of it. Adelaide has no parents and, therefore, could not have visited them. She is a *mamaloi,* a priestess-queen of the voodoo cult. Whenever she took leave, it was for the purpose of rushing to the *honfou,* the temple situated far away on a little clearing in the woods. And there my little tender Adelaide plays the part of a cruel priestess, invokes the holy snake, chokes children, drinks rum like an old ship's captain and manages unheard of orgies! Small wonder that she always returns home utterly exhausted. Well! You just wait, you little *canaille!*

October 26.
I ANNOUNCED that I was riding to Sale-Trou and had my horse saddled. The old woman had given me approximate directions to the temple, as well as a negro woman can give directions. Naturally, I lost my way, and had the pleasure of staying over night in the primeval forest. Fortunately I carried a hammock with me. Not until the next morning did I find the *honfou*-temple, a large, miserable straw hut upon a clearing which had been stamped and smoothed like a dance floor. A rough path led to the temple, and, on both sides, I noticed stakes driven into the earth and adorned alternately with the cadavers of black and white chickens. Between the stakes there were blown-out turkey eggs and grotesquely shaped stones and roots. A big strawberry tree—called *loco,* and held sacred by the believers—stood at the entrance to the temple; and around it were heaped shattered glasses, plates and bottles in its honor.
I entered the room. A few holes in the roof gave sufficient light. Underneath

one of them, fastened to a pillar, was a burned-down pitch torch. The interior decorations of the temple were very gay. Against the walls I saw pictures of Bismarck and King Edward VII. from an illustrated weekly. Both of them most assuredly came from me. Who else would have subscribed to the *"Woche"* and to the "Illustrated London News"? Probably Adelaide had generously bequeathed them. In addition there were a few pictures of saints,—horrible oil prints depicting St. Sebastian, St. Francis and Mother Mary—and, next to them, cartoons from *"Simplizissimus"* (mine too!) and from *"L'Assiette au Beurre."* In between hung a few old flag-rags, chains of shells and multi-colored paper garlands.
In the background, somewhat higher up, I noticed a heavy basket. Ah, I thought, that's where *Hougonbadagri,* the great voodoo god, is hidden! Very carefully I opened the cover and jumped back: I had no particular desire to be bitten by some poisonous reptile. But oh! To be sure, there was a snake in the basket, but only a harmless one; and starved to death besides! That is typically nigger; to pray to something as divine and then completely forget it when the festival is over! Naturally a reserve god could be easily procured in the woods. Anyway, *Damtala,* the good clatter-god, was decidedly better off than the almighty *Houedosobagui* lying miserably shrivelled and dead before me. The former gets oil every Friday, while the latter, who holds the place of John the Baptist in this crazy heathen-Christian voodoo cult, does not even get a little frog or a mouse!

October 29.
WHEN I displayed my new wisdom before Adelaide the next day—I acted as if I had known everything for a long time—she did not even attempt any longer to lie. I told her that the doctor had informed me, he who was a messenger of *Cimbi-Kita,* the head devil. And I showed her an axe over which I had poured some red ink. An axe drenched in blood is the symbol of this devil. The girl trembled, swallowed hard and could barely be quieted. "I knew it," she shouted. "I knew it! And I also told the *papaloi* about it. He is *Dom Pedre* himself."
I confirmed it—why shouldn't the good doctor be *Dom Pedre* himself? Now I learned that our own village, Petit Goaves, was the headquarters of the devil-sect of *Dom Pedre.* That was a man—and a nice swindler he must have been!—who came over a long time ago from the Spanish part of the island, and founded here the cult of *Cimbi-Kita,* the great devil, and his

knight, *Azilit.* He must have made a great deal of money out of it. But he himself and all of his greater and lesser devils may fetch me alive, if I don't make a nice business out of this story. I have an idea already.

November 18.

TODAY I heard the *neklesin,* the iron triangle, howl through the streets. How often I had heard this childish music before and never thought anything of it! Only now do I know that it is the gruesome signal calling the believers to the temple. I called my little *mamaloi* immediately and informed her that this time I would participate in the rites. She was beside herself; begged and entreated, cried and shrieked. But I did not give in. Again I showed her the old wooden axe with the red ink, which almost froze her with terror. I told her that I was specifically instructed by *Dom Pedre* and that everything would have to be done as usual. She left me to talk with her *houcibossales,* the tattooed voodoo people. I think she is there now; and the *papaloi* himself, too.

I used her absence to read another few chapters of my books; I have here collected a few dates which probably are trustworthy.

Apparently, Toussaint Louverture, the liberator of Haity, was a *papaloi* himself, as were Emperor Dessalines and King Christophe. Emperor Soulouque was a voodoo priest; I knew the black rotter when I first came to Port-au-Prince in 1858. And President Salnave, my good friend Salnave, in 1868 introduced the human sacrifice in person—the sacrifice of the "hornless he-goat." Salnave! Who would have thought it? The very knave with whom I—in the same year—did not build the pier in Port-au-Paix, which laid the foundation of my fortune. Then came President Salomon, the aged idiot, who was a pious disciple of voodoo. That Hippolyte, his successor, was little less so, I had often heard, but that he preserved as memories the skeletons of his victims is a particularly nice trait about him. When he died ten years ago, they found quite a number of these skeletons in his rooms. He might have left me some of them. I had closed many a good transaction with him—always fifty-fifty—and, besides that, he got all his uniforms free from me, with all the golden tinsel he could wish for! And all the calypsos came out of my pocket, too; and he never had to spend a *centime* for small tips for the gentlemen and deputies.

On the other hand, the two presidents of the sixties and seventies, Geffrard and Boisrond-Canal, were opposed to the voodoo cult. The very two with

whom it was so difficult to do business! In their days, too, fell the trials against the voodoo people. In 1864 eight persons were shot to death in Port-au-Prince because they had sacrificed and eaten a twelve-year-old girl. And, in 1876, a *papaloi* was sentenced to death, and, two years later, a number of women. That is not very much, if, as Texier has it, a thousand children—*cabrits sans comes* —were slaughtered and eaten every year.
Adelaide has not returned yet. But I shall insist upon my wish under all circumstances. I belong to this country, and have the right to know it in all its peculiarities.

10 P. M.
THE *papaloi* has sent an emissary, an *avalou*—sort of a sacristan— who pleaded for an interview in behalf of his master. I sent him away and refused to listen to anything. Before he left, I showed him my ink-spattered axe, which did not fail to make the desired impression. I notified the *papaloi* that I would shoot him down if he did not live up to my wishes.
At nine o'clock the fellow returned once more to bargain; incidentally, he was filled with a wholesome awe and did not even dare to enter my room. In the name of *Cimba-Kita,* the head devil, I did some tall cursing. This man, at least, is as certain of my devilish mission as Adelaide herself! She has not returned yet and I am positive she is being held. I told the *avalou* that, together with *Dom Pedre* himself, I would call for her if she weren't home within an hour.

Midnight.
EVERYTHING is arranged! The expedition can start tomorrow. The *papaloi* probably realized that I was not to be moved from my purpose, and therefore he gave in. True priest that he was, he still tried to secure something for himself and, through Adelaide, made the condition that I donate twenty dollars for the poor of the community—"the poor"—meant himself, of course! So I sent him the money immediately. Now the black privy councilor will probably be satisfied.
In return he sent me a handful of rotten plants which I was to use for a bath in order to be ordained and become a *canzou.* One really is expected to squat forty days in this mud bath until it has completely evaporated; but a shorter method was permitted me. I threw the stuff out, of course, but, for Adelaide's sake, I ate the second gift—*verver,* a mixture of corn and blood.

It tasted abominably. Now I am sufficiently purified to be accepted tomorrow night among the devil priests, the *bizangos* and *quinbindingues.*

November 22.

IT costs me an effort to hold the pen. My arm trembles and my hand refuses to obey. Two days I have lain on the couch and even today I walk around in a fever. All my bones seem crushed. Adelaide is still in bed. Small wonder, after that night! If I should report all that happened to my brother, I think the pious gentleman might still return the enclosed check.

God, how my back aches! Each smallest movement makes me scream. I hear Adelaide whimper in her bed. A little while ago I was at her bedside. She said no word; she only cried softly and kissed my hand. And I could hardly realize that this poor little animal was the same cruel priestess with her clawing, blood-stained hands.

I will relate everything quietly.

Adelaide left early that morning; I mounted my fallow that afternoon. My two good Brownings were secure in my saddle pocket. This time I knew the way to the *honfou,* which I reached at sundown. From afar I heard already the noise of excited voices, intermingled with the piercing sound of the *neklesin.* The great clearing was filled with black bodies; they had shed all their clothing and wore only a few knotted red handkerchiefs around their loins. Drinking out of their full-bellied *tafia* bottles, they ran up and down the path along which black and white fowl had been impaled on stakes. Shrieking, they shattered their bottles under the sacred strawberry tree. Apparently I was expected. A few men approached me, tethered my horse to a tree and led me along the path, pouring blood from their vessels over the pitifully cackling and fluttering hens as if they were so many flower pots. At the entrance to the temple someone pressed an empty bottle into my hand which I shattered under the strawberry tree. We entered the empty room, and everybody pressed after me. Shoved by naked bodies, I came close to the snake basket. Mighty pitch torches were fastened to the beams and sent their soot through the open roof-holes into the night. I was pleased with the red sheen upon the black, glistening bodies; it put me in good humor.

Next to the snake basket blazed a fire under a huge kettle. Close by the musicians sat upon their drums, *Houn, Hountor* and *Hountorgri,* dedicated to the three apostles, Peter, Paul and John. Behind them I saw a gigantic

fellow beating the *Assauntor* drum which is spanned with the skin of a dead *papaloi.* The rhythm became ever faster; ever louder they thundered through the crowded interior.

The acting *avalous* forced the crowd back on both sides and cleared an empty space in the middle. They threw down dry wood and faggots, and poked their burning torches into them. Suddenly a brilliant fire was burning on the stamped floor. Then they led five neophytes, three women and two men, into the circle. These had just finished their forty-days' purification in the mud bath which, fortunately, I had been spared. The drums stopped and the *papaloi* came forth.

He was an old, emaciated negro, clad like the rest in red knotted kerchiefs. He wore a blue ribbon around his forehead, from under which his long, foully clotted hair straggled. His assistants, the *dijons*, handed him a mass of hair, pieces of horn and herbs, which he scattered slowly into the flames, chanting incantations to the heavenly twins, *Saugo,* the god of lightning, and *Bado,* the god of winds, that they might fan the flames. Then he ordered the trembling neophytes to jump into the fire. The *dijons* coaxed and pushed the hesitating ones into the flames; it was marvelous to see how they jumped to and fro. Finally they were permitted to emerge again, and now the priest led them to the steaming kettle next to the snake basket. Now he implored *Opete,* the sacred turkey, and *Assougie,* the heavenly chatterbox. In their honor the neophytes had to reach into the boiling water; had to snatch pieces of meat from it which they distributed among the believers on huge cabbage leaves. Time and again the terribly scalded hands reached into the sizzling brew, until even the last one had his leaf. Only then did the measly old man accept them as full-fledged members of his community—in the name of *Attaschollos,* the great world spirit—and finally he left them to the mercy of their relatives and friends, who anointed their poor seared hands with salve. I was curious to see whether this benevolent priest would ask a similar ceremony of me, too, but nobody bothered. To be sure, they handed me a piece of meat too, and I ate it just like the rest. The *dijons* threw more fuel into the fire and arranged a spit over it.

Then they dragged in three rams by the horns, two black and one white, and led them before the *papaloi,* who pierced their throats with a powerful knife, and with one mighty thrust severed their heads. With his two hands he held them on high; showed them to the drummers first, then to the believers; and, dedicating them to the god of chaos, *Agaou Kata Badagri,*

he threw them into the kettle. In the meantime, the *dijons* caught the blood in huge vessels, mixed it with rum and distributed it around to drink. Then they skinned the goats and put them on the spit. I, too, drank; a sip at first, and then more and more. I felt a strange intoxication rise in me—a wild, lustful drunkenness such as I had never before known. I quite lost consciousness of my part as a disinterested spectator; more and more I entered into this wild world as one who belonged.

With pieces of charcoal the *dijons* drew a black circle on the floor next to the fire, and the *papaloi* stepped into it. And, while the joints roasted and sizzled, he invoked in a loud voice *Allegra Vadra,* the omniscient god. He begged him to enlighten his priests and the trusting community. And, through him, the god answered that enlightenment would come after the goat meat had been consumed. Thereupon the black figures sprang to the spit, tore off the meat with their hands and swallowed it hot and half raw. They broke the bones, gnawing them with their big teeth and throwing them high through the roof-holes into the night—in honor of *Allegra Vadra,* the great god.

And again the drums began to drone. *Houn,* the small one, began; then *Hountor* and *Hountorgri*. And finally, the mighty *Assountor*-drum began to shriek its loathesome song. Ever stronger grew the excitement; ever closer and hotter the black bodies pressed around me. The *avalous* put the spit aside and stamped out the fire. The black crowd surged forward.

And suddenly,—I don't know where she came from—Adelaide, the *mamaloi*, stood upon the snake basket. Like the rest she wore only a few kerchiefs over her loins and her left shoulder. Her forehead was adorned with the blue priest ribbon; her marvelous white teeth shone in the red light of the torches. She was exquisite, absolutely exquisite! With his head bent low, the *papaloi* handed her a big vessel with rum and blood, which she drained in a single draught. The drums were silent. Softly at first, and ever growing in volume she began the great song of the holy snake:

Leh! Eh! Bomba, hen, hen!
Cango bafio te,
Cango moune de le,
Cango do ki la
Cango li!

Twice, three times, she sang the wild words, until, from a hundred drunken lips, it came back to her:

Leh! Eh! Bomba, hen, hen!
Cango bafio te,
Cango moune de le,
Cango do ki la
Cango li!
The small drum accompanied her song, which grew softer again and seemed to die down completely. She rocked to and fro from the hips, bent her head and lifted it, drawing weird snake-lines in the air. And the crowd was silent; breathless in expectation. Softly someone whispered: “Be blessed, *Manho,* our priestess!” And another one: “St. John the Baptist kiss you, *Houangan,* his beloved!” The eyes of the negroes bulged from their sockets. Everybody was staring at the softly humming *mamaloi.*
Then, in a faltering voice, she said quietly: “Come here! *Houedo* hears you, the great snake!”
Everybody pressed close. It was almost impossible for the servants and priests to preserve order.
“Shall I get a new ass this summer?”—“Will my child get well?”— “Will my lover return, whom they made a soldier?” Everyone had a question to ask, a wish to make.
The black Pythia answered, her head sunk deep on her chest, her arms stretched downwards, stiff; her fingers painfully spread apart— perfect oracles which said neither “yes” nor “no,” but from which each one could take what he wished to hear. Satisfied, they stepped aside, throwing coppers into the old felt hat which the *papaloi* held. There was silver, too.
Again the drums droned; slowly the *mamaloi* seemed to awaken from her dream. She sprang down from the basket, tore the snake from it and mounted again. It was a long, black and yellow reptile. Confused by the firelight, it thrust its tongue forth and slowly wound itself around the outstretched arms of the priestess. The believers fell to the floor, touching the earth with their foreheads. “Long live the *mamaloi*, our mother and queen! She, *Houdja-Nikon,* our ruler!” And they prayed to the great snake, and the priestess exacted the oath of eternal allegiance. “May your brain rot and your intestines within you if ever you break the oath you swore!” Then they chanted: “We swear three strong oaths to you, *Hougon-badagri*, St. John the Baptist, you who come to us as *Sobagui*, as *Houedo,* the great voodoo god!”
Now the *mamaloi* opened another basket which stood behind her. From it

she drew fowl, black ones and white ones, and thrust them high into the air. The believers jumped up from the soil and grabbed the fluttering animals, tearing their heads off. Greedily they drank the freshly streaming blood that gushed from the fowl. Then they threw them out through the holes in the roof: “For you, *Houedo;* for you, *Hougonbadagri,* as a sign that we keep our oath!”

From behind six men pressed around the *mamaloi.* They wore devils' masks; goat furs hung from their shoulders, and their bodies were painted red with blood.

“Fear, fear *Cimbi-Kita!”* they cried. The mob surged back and formed a small opening into which they stepped.

They led a girl of ten years by a rope around her neck. The child looked around, surprised, timid, afraid, but did not cry. It staggered, could hardly stand on its feet; quite drunk with rum. The *papaloi* came close.

“To *Azilit* I give you, and to *Dom Pedre!* May they carry you to him, the greatest of all devils, to *Cimbi-Kita!”*

He strew herbs into the woolly hair of the child, horn-shavings and tufts of hair, and then laid a burning cinder on top of it. But, before the terrified child could reach with its hand into the burning hair, the *mamaloi,* with a horrible shriek, threw herself down from the basket like a maniac. Her fingers closed around the small neck; she lifted the child high up into the air and choked it to death.

“Aa-bo-bo!” she shrieked.

It seemed as if she would never let go of her victim. Finally the head priest tore the lifeless child away from her and, as he had done to the rams, cut the head off with one stroke. At the same time the devil-priests with mighty voices chanted their triumphant song:

Interrogez le cimetiere,
Il vous dira
De nous ou de la mort,
Qui des deux fournit
Les plus d'hotes.

Again the *papaloi,* with outstretched arms, showed the head to the drummers; again he threw it into the seething caldron. Rigid, indifferent, the *mamaloi* stood, While the devil-priests caught the blood in their rum vessels and hacked the body to pieces. Like animals they threw the raw pieces of meat to the believers; the latter fell on them, fought for them, tore at them.

“Aa-bo-bo! Le cabrit sans cornes!” they shrieked.
And all of them drank the fresh blood mixed with strong rum. A horrible drink, but one drinks it, must drink it, more and ever more! Now one of the devil-priests advanced into the circle next to the priestess. He tore his mask off; threw down his fur. Naked the black man stood there, his body weirdly painted with gore and hands dyed red with blood. Everybody was silent; nowhere was a voice to be heard. Only the small *Houn* drum softly droned to the devil dance, the dance of *Dom Pedre* which was about to begin. Motionless the dancer stood, without moving a muscle, for several minutes. Slowly he rocked to and fro; first the head, then the body. All his muscles were tense. A strange excitement seemed to overcome him and to infect everyone like a mystic fluid.
Each one looks at the other, still without moving; but one senses how the nerves begin to tingle. Now the priest begins to dance, whirls slowly at first, then ever faster. Louder sounds the *Houn* drum; the *Hountor* drum chimes in. Now life comes into the black bodies; one lifts a foot, another one an arm. They devour each other with their eyes. Two seize each other and join the dance. Now the *Hountorgri,* too, sounds and the mighty *Assauntor* drum; its side of human skin shrieks a terrifying, lashing wail of lust. Everybody leaps up. They whirl and dance, kick, stamp, jump like goats, cast themselves to the ground, beat the floor with their heads, leap up again, wave their arms and legs, and rave and shriek to the wild rhythm the priestess sings. Proudly she stands in the middle, lifting high the holy snake and singing her song: *“Leh! Eh! Bomba, hen, hen!”* Close by her side is the *papaloi;* from huge vats he squirts blood over the black figures which leap ever wilder, chant ever fiercer the song of the queen.
They take hold of one another, tear the red rags from their bodies. Their limbs intertwine; hot perspiration runs from the naked bodies. Drunk with rum and blood, whipped into boundless lust, they tear at each other like animals, throw one another to the ground, lift each other high in the air, thrust their greedy teeth into each other's flesh! And I feel myself drawn irresistibly into this devil-dance of madmen. A crazy lust invades the hall, a bloody delirium of love that transcends all human bounds. They have stopped singing a long time ago; out of their convulsions and delirium only the horrible devil-shout is audible: *“Aa-bo-bo!”*
I see men and women bite each other, possessing each other in every conceivable manner. Blood-thirsty, they thrust their nails into the flesh,

tearing deep wounds. The blood lulls their senses. I see men crawl on men; women on women. There, five roll together in a dark knot; here, one, like a dog, stoops over the snake basket. Their mad lust knows no distinction, cannot even mark living from inanimate things.
Two nigger girls fall on me; tear at my clothes. I seize their breasts, throw them to the floor, roll around, bite, shriek—just like all the rest. I see Adelaide indiscriminately possessing one man after the other; and women, too, always fresh ones—her devilish lust unquenchable. She rushes at me naked; red blood trickles from her arms and breasts. Only the blue priest-ribbon still adorns her forehead. Like black snakes her thick locks crawl from under it. She hurls me down, takes me by force, rushes up again and thrusts another woman into my arms. And she staggers away, embracing and embraced, ever by other black arms.
And now, all resistance gone, I plunge into the wildest frenzy, into the most unheard of embraces; leap, rage and shriek, wilder and madder than anybody else, the horrible: *"Aa-bo-bo!"*

I found myself outside, lying on the dance-place in a heap of black men and women. The sun was already up. All around me the black bodies lay, groaning and writhing in their dreams. With an immense effort I rose; my clothes hung from me in bloody tatters. I saw Adelaide lying close by, bruised and bloody from head to foot. I lifted her, carried her to my horse. Where I found the strength, I do not know; but I managed to lift her onto the horse's back, and so rode home, holding the senseless woman in my arms. I had her put to bed and went to mine....
I hear her whimpering again. I shall go and fetch her a glass of lemonade.

March 7, 1907.
NOW months have gone by. As I read over these last pages, it seems to me as if another, not myself, had lived through all this. It seems all so far away and so strange. And particularly when I am with Adelaide, I have to force myself to believe that she was present, too. She, a *mamaloi!* She, this tender, trusting, happy little creature? She has only one thought: our child. Will it really be a boy? Surely a boy? A hundred times she asks me that. And is so happy every time I tell her that it will most certainly be a boy. It is too funny: this child that is not even yet come takes up a large part of my thoughts. We have already agreed upon a name; already all the linen is in

readiness. And I am almost as worried for the little worm as Adelaide herself.

Incidentally, I have discovered a new extraordinary faculty in her. Now she is a full-fledged department head in my business, and does very well indeed. I have founded a new branch which gives me a lot of amusement. I distill a miracle-water, good for all sorts of things. The recipe is very simple: rain-water colored pink with a little tomato juice. This is poured into little fat bottles which I import labelled from New York. The label is designed after my own directions; it bears *Cimbi-Kita's* bloody axe, and the inscription: *Eau de Dom Pedre.* The bottles cost me three cents each, and I sell them for a dollar. Moreover, the sales are excellent; the niggers almost fight for it. Since last week I have also begun to ship them into the interior. The purchasers are very well satisfied; they claim that it works marvels for all kinds of ailments. If they could write, I would have quite a collection of testimonials by now. Adelaide, too, is of course convinced of its supernatural powers, and deals in it with real zeal. Her salary and percentage—she also gets a percentage from the sales—is always turned over to me that I may save it for "her boy." She is really charming, this black child. I almost believe I am in love with her.

August 26, 1907.

ADELAIDE is beside herself with joy; she has her boy! But that isn't all. The boy is white, and that makes her proud beyond belief. All negro children, as is well known, are not black at birth, but rather pink-looking, just like the children of white people. But, whereas these become white, negro children grow black, or at least brown, in the case of hybrids. Adelaide knew this, of course, and, with tears in her eyes, waited for her child to get black. She never let it from her arms, not even for a second, as if she could prevent it from acquiring its natural color. But hour after hour passed; and day after day; and her child became white and remained white—snow-white, in fact, whiter than myself. If it had not had black, kinky hair, nobody would have believed it to be of negro blood. Not until three weeks had passed did Adelaide permit me to take it in my arms. I never held a child in my arms; it was a strange feeling when the little fellow laughed at me and milled about with its little arms. What force he already has in his tiny fingers, particularly in his thumbs—which, of course, have three joints—really a marvelous fellow!

It is a pure joy to watch the mother standing in the store behind the counter, the pink miracle bottles piled up before her. Her strong, black bosom laughs from her red blouse, and the healthy white baby drinks mightily. Really, I feel well in my old days, and as young as ever. In my happiness over the birthday of my son, I have sent a large extra remittance to my dear brother. I can easily afford it; there will always be enough for the boy.

September 4.

I HAD *sworn* to myself that I would never again have anything to do with the voodoo crowd, unless it were in connection with my miracle water. Now I had to busy myself once more with them, after all; not as a participant this time, but as an attacker.

Yesterday the old hag who weeds my garden came crying to me. Her great-grandchild had disappeared. I consoled her by saying he probably had run

into the woods. She, too, had believed so at first, and had searched for days; but now she knew that the *bidangos* had caught him. He was being held in a hut outside the village and next week he was to be sacrificed in honor of *Cimbi-Kita, Azilit* and *Dom Pedre.* I promised to help her and rode off on my mission. When I got to the thatched hut a black fellow stepped before me, whom I recognized as the dancer of the devil-priest. I pushed him aside and went inside. There I found the boy squatting in a big box, bound hand and foot. Big pieces of corn-bread soaked in rum lay next to him. He stared at me from stupid, animal eyes. I cut him loose and took him away, the priest not daring to interfere. I had the boy taken directly aboard a Hamburg-American liner leaving that night. To the captain I gave a letter to a business friend in St. Thomas, who was to take care of the boy. Thus he is safe. Had he remained here he would have fallen victim to the sacrificial knife before long. This voodoo crowd doesn't easily let go of someone they have destined for slaughter. The old crone sobbed with joy when she heard that her only happiness—incidentally, an utterly helpless rascal—was safe aboard ship. Now she has nothing to fear; when he returns he will be a man, capable himself of offering sacrifices.

As a matter of fact, my action pleased me personally, too. It is assort of revenge for the mulatto boys who disappeared from my courtyard. The old woman has told me they, too, met the fate that was planned for her great-grandchild.

September 10.

FOR the first time in many months I have had another quarrel with Adelaide. She learned that I had saved Phylloxera's great-grandchild, and asked me about it. The priests of *Cimbi-Kita* had destined the boy to die; how could I dare to tear him from their strong clutches?

In all this time we had never said another word about voodoo, ever since the day, shortly after the sacrificial feast, when she had voluntarily told me that she had resigned her office as *mamaloi.* She could no longer remain a priestess, she said, because she loved me too much. I had laughed at the time, but inwardly I was pleased, nevertheless.

Now she began once more with this terrible superstition. At first I tried to argue with her, but gave it up soon enough, realizing that I could not take away from her a belief which she had absorbed with her mother's milk. Besides that I recognized that her reproaches sprang from her love for me,

and out of her great fear for my safety. She cried and sobbed, and nothing I could do would quiet her.

September 15.
ADELAIDE is impossible. Everywhere she sees shadows. She remains close by my side, like a dog who wants to protect me. Now this, to be sure, is touching, but also annoying; particularly because the boy, whom she never leaves alone, has quite a remarkable voice. Everything I eat she prepares herself; and, not content with this, she tastes everything before she permits me to eat it. Now I know that these negroes are great poison mixers who know their botany thoroughly, but I don't believe that any one of them would dare to use his science on me. So I laugh at Adelaide—but, nevertheless, I don't feel any too well about it.

September 24.
SO THEY have already taken away from me my “soul”! I know this from Phylloxera; the old lady is no less excited and anxious for me than Adelaide. Today she came to warn me. I wanted to send Adelaide from the room, but she insisted upon listening. It seems that the priests have set afoot the rumor that I had betrayed *Cimbi-Kita,* to whom I had sworn allegiance; that I am a *loup-garou,* a werewolf who sucks the blood of children while they sleep. Thereupon some of the *dijons* stole my “soul” by shaping a likeness of me in clay and hanging it in the temple. This alone would be harmless enough, but it has a rather unpleasant feature: from now on I am a man without a soul, whom anyone may kill. In fact, he who does it accomplishes a good deed.
Nevertheless I do not consider the affair of great importance and do not intend to share the women's fears. So long as my bloodhounds stand before my door, so long as my Brownings are at my bedside and so long as Adelaide prepares my food, I certainly don't fear these black fellows.
“For ages no negro has dared to attack a white man!” I consoled Adelaide. But she answered: “They no longer consider you a white man! They count you as one of them since you swore allegiance to *Cimbi-Kita!”*

October 2.
I PITY the poor woman so much. She follows me like a shadow; not for a second does she leave me out of her sight. She hardly sleeps at night, sitting

on a chair at my bedside and guarding my sleep.
She no longer weeps; quietly, silently she walks beside me as if she were wrestling with a great resolution.
How would it be if I gave up my business here? I don't want to go to Germany; not because I fear to collide again with its silly laws—long ago I ceased to bother with other women, since I have had Adelaide and the boy. But, I really cannot bring a negress along as my wife.
I might retire to St. Thomas. Adelaide would certainly feel at home there. I could build a beautiful country seat and might start some new kind of business, if I must have some occupation. If I could only sell my stuff here for a fairly decent sum.
I am writing in my work-room which looks like a fortress. Adelaide has gone out; she did not say where she was going, but I am positive she wants to bargain with the voodoo crowd. The three dogs are in the room before the locked door; my revolver is handy on my desk. It is really ridiculous—as if a nigger would dare harm a hair on my head in broad daylight! But I had to give in to Adelaide's wishes. She went alone; the child lies next to me on the couch and sleeps. I hope she will bring home good news.

October 30.
I THINK Adelaide has gone mad. She screamed and beat upon the door. I couldn't run fast enough to open it. She rushed directly to the boy, snatched him up and almost smothered him with her caresses. The little fellow began to cry pitifully. But she did not let go of him; kissed him, embraced him. I actually feared she would suffocate him.
Her behavior is really shocking. She says no word, but quite apparently she has been successful. She no longer tastes my meals; her anxiety seems to have disappeared. This surely means that all danger is past. But still she continues to follow me like a dog. At dinner she sat silently by my side without touching a bite; but, not for a second did she take her eyes off me. Something terrible seems to be brewing in her mind, but she does not speak; not the tiniest word does she say. I don't want to torment her, for I see how the poor woman is consumed with love for me.
I will take every step to get away from here as quickly as possible. I have already spoken with the Hamburg-American agent. He is not opposed to the deal, but he wants to pay hardly one-fourth of what my business is worth, and that only on the installment plan. And yet, I shall probably accept. After

all, I have made my share in safety for a long time and can afford to make a transaction at a loss. God, how happy Adelaide will be when I tell her about it! Then I shall marry her, for the boy's sake. She really deserves it. And when everything is in readiness, I shall say: “Now, child, pack your things.” She will be mad with joy!

November 11.

MY negotiations seem to be progressing satisfactorily. Even the cablegram from the agent's bank has come, stating that they stand ready to advance him the necessary cash. This does away with the principal obstacle; the details can be easily settled, since I am more than willing to compromise. The fellow knows this and insists upon calling me his “friend and benefactor.” Well, I don't blame him for not being able to hide his joy over such a marvelous transaction.

It is rather hard for me to keep my secret from Adelaide. Her condition gets worse and worse. Well, she probably will be able to stand it another week, and then her joy will be so much the greater. She called on her voodoo brethren a few times, and each time she returned in a still more desperate condition. I don't understand it at all, since all danger seems to have passed. All doors are now open at night as they used to be and even the cooking she leaves to the other servants. What else can it be?

She hardly speaks a word now. But her love for me and the boy grows each day, grows almost boundless. This love has something uncanny about it which almost takes my breath away. If I take the boy on my knee and play with him, she shrieks, rushes from the room, throws herself on the bed and sobs as if her heart were breaking.

She must be ill and almost contaminates me with her strange disease. I shall bless the moment when we are able to leave this terrible hole with its horrible secrets.

November 15.

THIS morning she was quite beside herself. She wanted to do a few errands, taking the child with her. Thus she bid me farewell, but in a most unnatural way. Her eyes had long ago become red and inflamed from crying, but this morning entire cataracts fell from them. She could not tear herself from my arms; time and again she held the boy for me to kiss—I was quite moved by the scene. Thank God, the Hamburg-American agent

came directly afterwards to bring the contracts for my signature. Now the names are affixed to them and the bank check is in my hands. This house is no longer mine; I begged the buyer to permit me to stay another few days. "Half a year, if you want to!" he said. But I promised that I would not want to stay even another week. Saturday the steamer for St. Thomas is leaving, and by then everything must be ready.
Now I shall put flowers on the table. When she returns, she shall hear the joyous news.

5 P. M.
THIS is horrible! Adelaide did not come back; she did not come, I say! She did not come! I ran in to town; nobody had seen her. I returned home; she had not arrived. I went to the garden to look for the old hag; she was not there. I ran to her hut—and found her, bound to a pillar.
"At last you have come—at last! Hurry, before it is too late!" I cut her loose; it was difficult to get anything out of the half-crazed woman. "She has gone to the *honfou*—the *mamaloi,"* she stammered. "To the *honfou* with her child. They bound me so I could not warn you." I ran back to the house to get my pistols. I am writing these lines while my horse is being saddled. Oh God, what may...
Please God...!

November 16.
I RODE through the woods. I do not think I thought about anything; only this: you must get there in time—you must get there in time!
The sun had gone down when I crossed the clearing. Two fellows caught hold of my reins. I slashed my whip across their faces. I jumped off, threw the reins over the strawberry tree. Then I rushed into the *honfou,* thrusting the crowd right and left.
I know I cried out. There, in the red light, stood the *mamaloi* on the basket, the snake coiled around her blue ribbon. And, high above her head, she held my child by the throat. And she choked it, choked it, choked it!
I must have shrieked. I tore my Brownings from my pocket and fired. Two shots; one at her face, the other at her heart. She tumbled from the basket. I sprang forward and lifted up the child. I realized immediately that it was dead, but still so warm, so very warm.
Right and left I shot into the crowd. They pushed and fell aside; they

howled, bellowed and shrieked. I tore the torches from the walls and hurled them into the thatch. It burned like tinder.
I mounted my horse and rode back, carrying the dead child home. I did save my child; not from death but from the teeth of those black devils. On my desk I found this letter—I don't know how it got there:

You had betrayed *Cimbi-Kita* and they wanted to kill you. But they will spare you if I sacrifice my child. I love it so; but I love you still more. Therefore I will do what *Cimbi-Kita* demands. I know that you will drive me from you when you hear what I have done. Therefore I shall take poison and you will not see me again. But you will know how much I love you. For now you are quite safe.
I love you dearly. Adelaide.

NOW my life lies shattered before me. What shall I do? I know no more. I shall put these pages into an envelope and dispatch them. That is one bit of work left to do. And then?
I ANSWERED immediately. My letter was sent in care of the steamship agent, with the note: “Please forward.” I got it back with another note: “Addressee dead.”

The White Maiden

A mi me gusta el bianco!
Viva el bianco, muera el negro!
Porque el negro es muy triste
Yo soy allegre!
Yo no lo quiero!
Andalusian copla.

DONALD MCLEAN was waiting for him in the cafe. When Lothar entered, he cried:
“At last! I thought you would never come.”
Lothar sat down, aimlessly stirring the lemonade the girl brought him.
“What is it?” he asked.
McLean leaned slightly forward.
“It should interest you,” he said. “You are studying the transformations of Aphrodite, are you not? Well, there may be a chance of your seeing the foam-born goddess in a new guise.”
Lothar yawned.
“Ah! Really?”
“Really!” said McLean.
“Just a moment, please,” Lothar proceeded. “Venus is Proteus' true daughter, but I flatter myself I know all her disguises. For more than a year I was in Bombay with Klaus Petersen...”
“Well?” asked the Scotchman.
“Well? Obviously you don't know Klaus Petersen? *Herr* Klaus from Hamburg is a talented man; perhaps a genius! The *Marechal* Gilles de Rais was a charlatan compared to him!”
Donald McLean shrugged his shoulders.
“That isn't the only art!”
“Certainly not! But, just wait. Oscar Wilde was a good friend of mine, as you know, and I knew Inez Seckel for many years. Each one of these names ought to give you a wealth of sensations!”
“Not all of them,” the painter remarked.
“Not all of them?” Lothar drummed on the table. “But the best, no doubt! In

short: I know the Venus who changes into Eros; I know her when she clothes herself in furs and swings the scourge. I know Venus as a Sphinx, thrusting her blood-thirsty claws into the flesh of children. I know Venus when she wallows lustfully in decay. And I know the black love-goddess who, at Satan's masses, squirts the priest's revolting sacrifice over the body of a virgin. Laurette Dumont took me into her private zoo. I know what few others know; the rare delights that Sodom offers! More than that. In Geneva I fathomed Lady Kathlin McMurdoch's secret, of which no other living person was aware! I know the vilest Venus—or shall I say the purest?—the one which weds man to the flower. Do you still believe that Venus could choose a mask unknown tome?"

McLean slowly sipped his *strega*.

"I promise you nothing," he said. "I only know that the Duke Ettore Aldobrandini has been in Naples again these last three days. I met him yesterday on the Toledo."

"I should be glad to meet him," Lothar replied. "I have heard of him often enough. He is said to be one of the few men who knows how to make of his life a work of art,—and has the means to do it."

"I don't believe they have exaggerated," the Scotch painter continued. "You can convince yourself; the day after tomorrow the Duke is giving a reception at which I shall be glad to introduce you."

"Thank you," Lothar replied.

The Scotchman laughed.

"Aldobrandini was in excellent spirits when I met him. Besides, the extraordinary hour for which he invited me—five o'clock in the afternoon—indicates that something unusual is in the air! For this reason I believe that the Duke has a special surprise for his friends; if this be the case, you may rest assured that we shall see something unheard of. The Duke never follows the trodden path."

"Let's hope that you are right!" Lothar sighed. "In that case, I shall have the pleasure of calling for you at your home the day after tomorrow?"

LARGO SAN DOMENICO!" McLean instructed the driver. "Palazzo Corigliano!"

The two men mounted the broad baroque stairway; an English butler led them into the salon. They found seven or eight gentlemen, all in full dress; the only exception was a priest in a violet soutane.

McLean introduced his friend to the Duke, who shook hands with him.
“Thank you for coming,” he said with a charming smile. “I hope you won't be entirely disappointed.”
He bowed and, in a somewhat louder voice, addressed all those present.
“Gentlemen!” he said. “I beg your indulgence for having disturbed you at such an unusual hour. But it is a case of necessity; unfortunately, the little doe that I shall have the honor of presenting to you today comes from a very good, respectable family. She can come to me only under great difficulties, and must positively be home by half past six, so that her father and mother and the English governess will not notice her absence. These, gentlemen, are things which a cavalier has to reckon with! And now I shall ask you to excuse me for a few minutes, as I still have a few preparations to make. In the meantime I hope you will partake of a little refreshment.”
The Duke motioned to his servant, bowed again and left the room.
A gentleman with huge Victor-Emanuel mustachios approached Lothar. It was di Nardis, the political editor of the “Pungolo,” who wrote under the pseudonym “Fuoco.”
“I wager we shall witness an Arabian joke,” he laughed. “The Duke has just returned from Bagdad.”
The priest shook his head.
“No, Don Goffredo,” he said, “we shall see a piece of Italian Renaissance. For the last half year the Duke has been studying Valdomini's secret history of the Borgias, loaned to him after long entreaties by the director of the royal archives in Severino e Sosio.”
“Well, we shall see,” answered McLean. “Will you give me, meanwhile, the racing tips, which you promised me?”
The editor drew out a notebook and entered into a long conversation on the turf with the Scottish painter and the priest. Lodiar slowly sipped orange ice from a crystal plate. He studied the pretty golden spoon which bore the arms of the Aldobrandinis; a ragged cross-beam surrounded by six stars.
After half an hour a servant drew back the curtains. “The Duke prays you to follow me,” he announced. He led the guests through two small rooms, then he opened a double door, had them all pass through it, and quickly shut it behind them. They found themselves in a spacious, extremely long hall, sparingly lighted. The floor was covered with a wine-red rug, and the doors and windows were hung with heavy curtains of the same hue, in which the ceiling, too, was painted. The walls, absolutely bare, were also overlaid

with wine-red cloth; and the same material covered the few armchairs, sofas and lounges which stood around the room. The far end of the room was in complete darkness; it was barely possible to distinguish a grand piano decorated with red damask.
“Please be seated, gentlemen,” cried the Duke. He himself took a chair and the others followed suit. Quickly the servants moved from one wall-bracket to the other, extinguishing the few burning candles.
When the room was in utter darkness, a soft chord from the piano became audible. Softly, a sequence of moving cadences floated through the hall.
“Palestrina,” the priest murmured under his breath. “You see that you were wrong with your Arabian idea, Don Goffredo.”

“Well,” the editor answered in the same tone, “was yours a happier guess when you thought of Cesare Borgia?”
They recognized, incidentally, that the piano was an old spinet. The simple chords awoke a strange sensation in Lothar, but he was unable to determine

exactly what it was. At any rate, it was something he had not felt for a long, long time.
Di Nardis leaned toward him so closely that his mustachio tickled Lothar's cheek.
“I have it!” he whispered. “I did not know that I could still be so ingenious.”
Lothar felt that he was right.
After a while the quiet servant lit two candles. A pale, almost uncanny sheen fell upon the hall.
The music played on.
“And yet,” Lothar whispered to his neighbor, “there is a curious cruelty in these tones. I might say, an innocent cruelty.”
Again the quiet servant lit a few candles. Lothar stared into the red glow which filled the entire room like a mist.
The blood-color almost stifled him. His soul clung to the tones which awoke in him the sensation of a faint shimmering white. But the red obtruded itself, gained the upper hand: always new candles were lit by the quiet servant.
“This is unbearable,” Lothar heard the editor hiss through his teeth.
Now the hall was half lit. The red seemed to cover everything with a stifling pall, and the white of the innocent music became ever fainter—fainter—
Then, from behind the spinet, emerged a figure; a young girl wrapped in a great white shroud. Slowly she walked to the middle of the hall, a shining white cloud in the red glow.
There the maiden stopped. She spread her arms so that the shroud fell to the floor. Like silent swans the cloth kissed her feet, but the white of her body shone more brightly still.
Lothar leaned back and involuntarily raised his hands to his eyes.
“It almost blinds you,” he breathed.
She was a young, adolescent girl, with the charming unripeness of a bud—a sovereign innocence that needed no protection; and, at the same time, sure promise that called forth a boundless wish for fulfillment. Her blue-black hair, parted in the middle, waved over temples and ears, and was caught in a heavy knot at the back. The big black eyes looked straight at the men, indifferently, without seeing anyone. They seemed to smile like her lips: a strange, unconscious smile of crudest innocence.
And the gleaming white flesh shone so brightly that all the red about her

appeared to recede. The music seemed to throb with exultation.
Only now did Lothar notice that the girl carried a snow-white Jove on her hand. She bent her head slightly and raised her arm, and the white dove stretched its little head.
And the pigeon kissed the white maiden. She caressed it, stroked its head, and pressed the bird gently to her bosom. The white dove lifted its wings a little and cuddled close, closer to the gleaming flesh.
“Blessed dove!” whispered the priest.
And then, with a sudden, quick motion, the white maiden lifted the pigeon with both hands high up over her head. She leaned far back and, with a strong jerk, tore the dove in two. The red blood trickled down without spattering her face, flowing down in long streams over shoulders and breast, over the gleaming body of the white maiden.
All around the red mist closed in again; it was as if the white maiden were drowning in a bath of blood. Trembling, anguished, she cowered down. And from all sides the lustful glow crept near; the floor opened like a maw of fire; the frightful red engulfed the white maiden.
The next instant the trap door had closed again. The silent servant tore back the curtains and quickly led the guests back to the reception room.
No one seemed to want to say a word. Silently they took their coats and went downstairs. The Duke had disappeared.

“GENTLEMEN!” said the editor of the “Pungolo” to Lothar and the Scottish painter, when they reached the street. “Will you dine with me on Bertolini's terrace?”
They drove together to the terrace. Silently they drank their champagne; silently they stared down on cruelly beautiful Naples bathed by the last rays of the evening sun in a luminous glow. The editor took out his notebook and jotted down a few figures. “Eighteen—blood, four—dove, twenty-one—maiden,” he said. “A fine *terno,* I shall try it in the lottery.”

Tomato Sauce

Chi va lontan dalla sua patria, vede
Cose da quel, che gia credea, lontane;
Che narrandole poi non se gli crede,
E stimato bugiardo ne rimane:
Che l' *sciocco vulgo non gli vuoldar fede,*
Se non le vede a tocca chiare e plane:
Per questo io so che l' inesperienza
Fara al mio canto dar poca credenza.

Poca o molta ch'io ciabbia, non bisogna
Ch'io ponga mente al vulgo sciocco e ignoro —
Ariosto, L'Orlando Furioso, Canto VII.

THE first time: at the *corrida* five weeks ago, when the black bull of Miura gorged little Quitino through the arm——

And again the following Sunday and the Sunday after—I met him at each bull-fight. I used to sit in front in order to take a few snapshots; his subscription seat was next to mine. A little man with a round hat and the black smock of an English clergyman. Pale, smooth shaven, with a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles on his nose. And something else, too: he had no eyelashes.

I became aware of him immediately. At the moment when the first bull took the horse upon his horns and the tall *picador* fell clumsily off. The nag jumped up painfully again and cantered away, its body torn open, and its legs entangled in its own entrails, which hung down and dragged in the sand. At the same instant I heard a sigh at my side—a deep sigh of content. We sat together the entire afternoon, never speaking a word. The pretty play of the *bandilleros* interested him very little. But when the *espada* thrust his blade into the bull's neck, so that the handle rose like a cross above the mighty horns, then he gripped the barrier with both hands and leaned far over. And the *garocha* —that was the thing he prized most. When the blood squirted from the chest of the horse in a stream as thick as an arm, or when a *chulo* put the mortally wounded animal out of misery by driving his short dagger into its brain, or when the maddened bull tore a horse's carcass to

shreds in the arena, burying his horns in the lifeless mass—then this man softly rubbed his palms together. Once I asked him:
"You are a bull-fight fan—an *aficionado?"*
He nodded but said no word; he did not want to be disturbed in his enjoyment.
Granada is not a big place, so I soon learned his name. He was the chaplain of the small English colony; his countrymen always called him the "Pope." Apparently he was not held in high regard; nobody had anything to do with him socially.

ON Wednesday I visited the cock-fight. A small amphitheatre, perfectly round, with raised benches. In the center, the arena, directly under the skylight. The reek of the rabble, shouting and spitting—it takes some nerve to enter. Two cocks are brought in, looking like hens, with their combs and tails cut off. They are weighed, then taken from their cages. And they go for each other without a moment's hesitation. The air is full of flying feathers: again and again the two birds fly at each other, mutilating each other with beaks and spurs—without a sound. Only the human beasts around them cry and shout, curse and bet. Ha, the yellow cock has hacked out one of the white one's eyes, snapped it up from the floor and swallowed it! The heads and necks of the birds, long since plucked bare, sway like snakes above the bodies. Not for a moment do they let go of each other. Their feathers are crimsoned. You hardly recognize their forms any more, as they hack each other to bloody chunks. Now the yellow one has lost both his eyes; he hacks blindly in the air while every second the beak of his rival beats down on his head. At last he sinks down; without resistance, without a sound, he permits the foe to finish his task. Nor is this quickly done; five to six minutes are still needed by the white cock, himself exhausted unto death by a hundred spur-thrusts and bites.
There they sit around, my fellowmen, human beings, all; they laugh at the impotent beak-thrusts of the victor, urging him on and counting each new bite—for the sake of the bets.
At last! Thirty minutes, the allotted time, are spent; the battle is over. One fellow, the owner of the victorious cock, rises; with derisive laughter he slays his opponent's bird with a club: this is his privilege. Now they wash the cocks at the pump and count the wounds in order to settle the bets.
I felt a hand on my shoulder.

“How do you do?” the Pope asked. His watery eyes, without lashes, smiled contentedly behind his large glasses. “You like that, don't you?” he proceeded.
For a moment I did not know whether he was in earnest. His question seemed so utterly and stupidly offensive that I stared at him without answering.
But he misunderstood my silence, took it for consent; so certain was he.
“Yes,” he said quietly and very slowly. “This is real satisfaction.”
We were pushed apart; they brought new cocks into the arena.

A FEW days later I was invited to tea by the English Consul. I was punctual, the first guest to arrive.
As I greeted him and his old mother, he said:
“I am glad you are early. I want to have a few words with you in private.”
“I am entirely at your disposal,” I smiled.
The Consul drew his rocking-chair closer and, with strange earnestness, proceeded:
“Far be it from me to dictate to you, my dear sir! But, if it is your intention to remain here longer and to move about generally in society, —as well as in the English colony—I should like to give you some friendly advice.”
I was quite curious to hear what he was driving at.
“And your advice?” I asked.
“You have been seen several times in the company of our clergyman...” he continued.
“I beg your pardon!” I interrupted. “I know very little about him. The day before yesterday we exchanged a few words for the first time.”
“So much the better!” the Consul replied. “Then I should advise you to shun association with him, at least in public.”
“Thank you, Consul,” I said. “Would it be indiscreet to ask the reason for this?”
“Of course, I owe you an explanation,” he answered, “although I am not so sure that it will satisfy you. The Pope—you know that they have given him this nickname?”
I nodded.
“Well, then,” he proceeded, “the Pope is taboo in society. He attends the bull-fights regularly,—that isn't so bad—he also never misses a single cock-fight; in short, he has tastes which render him impossible among

Europeans."
"But, Consul, if you condemn him so much for this, why do you permit him to retain his unquestionably honorable office?"
"Well, after all, he has been ordained," the old lady volunteered.
"And, besides that," the Consul affirmed, "in all his twenty years here he has never given the slightest tangible reason for complaint. Moreover, the position of clergyman in our tiny community is the worst paid on the entire continent—it would hardly be possible to replace him."
"Then you are satisfied with his sermons, nevertheless," I said, turning to the Consul's mother, making an effort to suppress a malicious smile.
The old lady straightened up in her chair.
"I would never permit him to speak a word of his own in the church," she answered very definitely. "Every Sunday he reads his sermons from Dean Harley's collection."
The answer flustered me somewhat, and I was silent.
"Incidentally," the Consul began once more, "it would be unjust not to mention one of the Pope's good traits. He owns a considerable fortune, and uses his income solely for charitable purposes, while he himself, apart from his passions, lives an extraordinarily modest, even poor, life."
"Nice kind of charity!" His mother interrupted him. "Whom does he assist? Wounded *toreadores* and their families, or even the victim of a *salsa."*
"A—what?" I asked.
"My mother means a *salsa de tomates,"* the Consul explained.
"Tomato sauce?" I repeated. "The Pope assists the victims of—tomato sauce?"
The Consul laughed briefly. Then he said very seriously:
"Have you never heard of a *salsa?* It is an ancient, horrible custom of Andalusia, which still exists in spite of every punishment by civic and church authorities. Since I have been Consul here, there is proof that a *salsa* has twice taken place. But even in these cases no definite facts were established, in as much as the participants, in spite of the floggings habitual in Spanish prisons, would rather bite off their tongues than reveal even a syllable. Therefore, I could only give you a vague, possibly false, report; make the Pope tell you, if the horrible secret interests you. For he—in spite of the fact that nobody can prove it—is said to be an adherent of this awful custom, and it is particularly this suspicion which causes us to shun him."
A few guests entered; our conversation was interrupted.

WHEN I went to the bull-fights the following Sunday, I brought along a few particularly good snapshots of the last *corrida* for the Pope. I wanted to make him a present of them, but he hardly looked at them. “Forgive me,” he said, “but they do not interest me at all.” I looked puzzled.
“Oh, I did not mean to offend you!” he proceeded. “You see, it is only the redness, the redness of blood which I care for.”
It sounded almost poetic the way this pale ascetic said: “The redness of blood!”
At any rate, we entered into a discussion. And, in the midst of it, I said without warning: “I would like to see a *salsa*. Won't you take me with you some time?”
He was silent. The pale, cracked lips trembled.
Then he asked: “A *salsa?*—Do you know what that is?”
I lied. “Of course!”
Again he stared at me. Then his eyes fell on the old scars of student duels on my cheek and forehead.
And, as if these signs of childish blood-shedding were a secret passport, he stroked them softly with his finger and said solemnly:
“I will take you with me.”

A FEW weeks later, one evening about nine o'clock, there was a knock at my door. Before I could say: “Come in!” the Pope entered.
“I have come to fetch you,” he said.

“What for?” I asked.
“You know,” he answered. “Are you ready?”
I rose.
“In a minute!” I cried. “Will you have a cigar?”
“Thank you. I don't smoke.”
“A glass of wine?”
“No, thanks. I do not drink either. Please hurry.”
I took my hat and followed him down the stairs into the moonlit night. Silently we walked through the streets, along the Genii, under pyrrhus-trees in red bloom. We turned to the left, ascended the Moor-mountain and crossed the Field of the Martyrs. In front of us glowed, in warm silver, the snow-capped mountains of the Sierra; round about on the hills, fires shone from the caves where the gypsies and other vagabonds live. We circled the deep valley of the Alhambra, filled almost to the brim with a sea of green elms; then through the avenue of age-old cypresses towards the Generalife;

and still higher up the mountain, from the top of which the last prince of the Moors, the fair-haired Boabdil, sent his farewell sighs down to lost Granada.

I looked at my strange companion. His glance, turned inward, saw nothing of the glory of this night. As the moonlight played over those small, bloodless lips, upon those sunken cheeks and the deep hollows in the temples, a feeling as if I had known this gruesome ascetic for ages overcame me. And suddenly, like a flash, the solution came: this was the face which the fearful Zurbaran gave to his ecstatic monks!

Now the way led through broad-leaved agaves, which lifted the wooden stems of their blossoms the height of three men into the air. We heard the Darro roar as it leaped down the cliffs beyond the mountain.

Three men in brown, tattered coats approached us; already from afar they saluted my companion.

“Guards,” the Pope said. “Wait here. I shall talk to them!”

He approached the men, who apparently had been expecting him. I could not understand what they said, but obviously it was about me. One of the men gesticulated vehemently, looked suspiciously at me, threw his arms in the air and shouted again and again: *“Ojo el caballero!”* But the Pope quieted him. Finally he motioned me to come closer.

“Sea Usted bienvenido, caballero!” He saluted me and doffed his hat. The two other guards remained at their post; the third one accompanied us.

“He is the patron; the manager, so to speak, of the affair,” the Pope explained.

A few paces ahead we reached one of the cave dwellings, distinguished in no way from the hundreds of others along the slopes of Granada. In front of the door-hole, as usual, there was a small, levelled spot, surrounded by dense cactus hedges. There about twenty ruffians stood around, but there was no gypsy among them. In one corner burned a small fire between two stones; above it hung a kettle.

The Pope reached into his pocket and took out one *duro* after the other, which he turned over to our companion.

“These people are so suspicious,” he said, “they take nothing but silver.”

The Andalusian crouched down by the fire and examined each single coin. He rang them on a stone and bit them with his teeth. Then he counted them —one hundred *pesetas* in all.

“Shall I give him some money as well?” I asked.

“No,” said the Pope. “You'd better do some betting; that will give you a safer standing with these people.”
I did not understand him.
“Safer standing?” I repeated. “How so?”
The Pope smiled.
“Oh—by betting you come down nearer to their level and make yourself more equally guilty with them.”
“Tell me, Reverend,” I exclaimed, “how is it, then, that you do not bet?”
He met my glance firmly and replied carelessly:
“I? I never bet! Betting detracts from the pure joy of watching.”
In the meantime, another half dozen suspicious-looking individuals had arrived, all of them shrouded in the inevitable brown cloth which serves the Andalusians for a cloak.
“What are we waiting for?” I asked one of the men.
“For the moon, *caballero,*” he replied. “It must set first.”
Then he offered me a big glass of *aguardiente.* I declined, but the Englishman pressed the glass into my hand.
“Drink! Drink!” he insisted. “It is the first time for you—you may need it.”
The others, too, partook of the liquor. However, they made no noise; only hasty whispers and hoarse murmurs penetrated the night. As the moon sank in the northwest behind the Cortadura, they fetched long pitch torches from the cave and lit them. Then they built a small stone circle in the middle; this was the arena. Around this circle they dug holes in the ground and affixed the torches. And, in the red gleam of the flames, two men began to undress; they kept only their leather breeches on. Then they sat down opposite each other and crossed their legs in Oriental fashion. It was only now that I noticed two strong horizontal beams sunk into the ground, each one of which carried two solid iron rings.
Between these two rings the two men had taken their places. Somebody ran into the cave and brought out a few lengths of heavy rope which they wound around the bodies and legs of the two, binding each one to the rings. They were fixed as in a vise; only the upper parts of their bodies could they move freely.
They sat without a word, sucking at their cigarettes and emptying the liquor glasses which were filled for them again and again. Clearly they were both quite drunk by this time, their eyes fixed stupidly on the ground. And all around them, in the circle of smoking torches, the other men settled down.

Suddenly I heard an ugly screeching behind my back which almost burst my eardrums. I turned around; somebody was carefully sharpening a small *navajo* on a round grinding stone. He tested the knife with the nail of his thumb, put it aside and took another one.
I turned to the Pope.
“This *salsa* is a kind of—duel?”
“Duel?” he replied. “Oh no. It is a kind of cock-fight.”
“What?” I exclaimed. “And why do these men engage in this—cockfight? Have they offended each other or is it jealousy?”
“Not at all,” the Englishman answered quietly. “They have no reason at all. Perhaps they are the best of friends; perhaps they don't even know each other. They only want to prove their—courage. They want to show that they are no worse than the bulls and cocks.”
His ugly lips essayed a wry smile as he proceeded:
“Something like your German student duels.”
Abroad, I am always a patriot. That much I have learned from the English: right or wrong—my country!
Therefore I answered him rather sharply:
“Reverend, the comparison is ludicrous! That is something which you cannot judge.”
“Perhaps,” said the Pope. “But I have seen many a fine duel in Goettingen. Lots of blood; lots of blood....”
In the meantime the manager had selected a seat next to us. He pulled a dirty notebook and a small pencil from his pocket.
“Who bets on Bombita?” he cried.
“I!”—“One *peseta!”*—“*Two duros!”*—“No, I'm going to back Lagartijillo!”
The drunken voices intermingled.
The Pope grabbed my arm.
“Arrange your bets so that you lose either way,” he said. “Give them long odds; you cannot be too careful with this crowd.”
So I took quite a number of the bets offered, and always at odds of three to one. Since I bet on both of them, I had to lose necessarily. While the manager was noting down all the bets in clumsy symbols, the sharpened *navajos* were handed round. The blades were about two inches long. Then they were shut, and passed to the two combatants.
“Which one do you want, Bombita Chico, my little cock?” The sharpener laughed.

“Let me have it! No matter which!” grunted the drunkard.
“I want my own knife!” shouted Lagartijillo.
“Then give me mine! It's better anyway!” croaked the other.
All bets were entered. The manager saw that each man was given another huge glass of *aguardiente,* which he emptied in one gulp. Both threw their cigarettes away. Then each one was given a long red woollen scarf, a hip girdle, which he tied around the lower left arm and hand.
“You may start, boys!” the manager shouted. “Open the knives.”
The blades of the *navajos* snapped open with a click and remained fixed. A shrill, unpleasant sound. But the two men remained absolutely quiet; neither one made a movement.
“Begin, my little cocks!” repeated the manager.
But the battlers sat motionless; they did not stir. The Andalusians became impatient.
“Get him, Bombita, my young bull! Push your little horns into his body!”
“Ah—you want to be cocks? You are hens! Hens!”
And the chorus howled: “Hens! Hens! Why don't you lay eggs? You hens, you!”
Bombita Chico stretched himself and made a thrust at his adversary. The other lifted his left arm and caught the lazy thrust in his scarf. The two men were apparently so drunk that they could hardly control their movements.
“Wait! Wait!” the Pope whispered. “Wait until they see blood!”
The Andalusians never stopped baiting the two; first with good-natured raillery and then with biting scorn. And again and again they hissed in their ears.
“You are hens! Go lay eggs! Hens! Hens!”
Now they both thrust at each other, almost blindly. The next minute one of them received a small wound in his left shoulder.
“Bravo, darling! Bravo, Bombita! Show him, my little cock, that you have spurs!”
They paused a moment, and with their left arms wiped the dirty sweat from their faces.
“Water!” shouted Lagartijillo.
A large decanter was handed over and they drank thirstily. One could see how they sobered up. The dull glances became sharp, piercing. Hatefully they stared at each other.
“Are you ready, you hen?” asked the little one.

Instead of answering the other lunged forward and cut his cheek open for its entire length. The blood streamed down over the naked body.
“Ah, it begins—it begins,” the Pope murmured.
The Andalusians were silent. Greedily they followed the movements of the one whom they had backed with their money. And the two human beings lunged and thrust....
The shining blades flashed like silver sparks through the red gleam of the torches and bit into the woollen guards on the left arms. A big drop of boiling pitch from one of the torches fell upon the chest of one of the men. He did not even notice it.
So rapidly did they flail their arms about in the air that it was impossible to see when one had struck home. Only the bloody rivulets all over the bodies testified to the growing number of cuts and gashes.
“Halt! Halt!” cried the patron. The men refused to stop. “Halt!” he cried once more. “Bombita's blade is broken!”
Two Andalusians rushed up, took an old door on which they had been sitting and ruthlessly threw it between the battlers, standing it on end so that the two could no longer see each other.
“Give me your knives, little beasts!” the patron shouted. The two obeyed willingly. His sharp eye had seen correctly; Bombita's knife was broken in half. He had sliced his opponent's ear and against the hard bone of the skull the blade had broken off.
Each one was given another glass of liquor, a new knife, and the door was taken away.
And this time they went for each other like two cocks, without thinking; blind with rage, stab for stab——
The brown bodies became crimson; the blood gushed from dozens of wounds. From the forehead of little Bombita a brown strip of skin hung down; moist wisps of hair licked the wound. While his knife caught in the enemy's bandage, the latter dug his knife twice, three times, deep into his neck.
“Take off your bandage, if you have the courage!” the little one shrieked, as he bore off his own with his teeth.
Lagartijillo hesitated for a moment, then followed suit. Automatically they still parried as before with their left arms, which were soon cut to shreds.
Again one of the blades snapped. Again the old door separated them. Again they got liquor and new knives.

“Stab him, Lagartijillo, my strong bull. Stab him!” one of the men shouted. “Tear the bowels out of the old horse!”
Unexpectedly Lagartijillo, at the very moment when the other was whisked away, gave his adversary a fearful thrust in the belly from below, and drew the blade sharply upward and sideways. A horrible mess of entrails crawled from the huge wound. And then, he stabbed once more from above, quick as lightning, and severed the big vein that nourishes the arm.
Bombita shrieked and doubled up while a stream of blood as thick as an arm gushed from the wound right into the other's face. It seemed as if he must topple over, utterly exhausted; but suddenly he rose once more, expanding his broad chest, raised his arm and lunged at his enemy who was blinded by blood. And he struck him, between two ribs, right in the heart. Lagartijillo beat the air with both arms; the knife fell from his hand. Lifeless, the huge body fell forward over its own legs.
And, as if this sight gave new strength to the dying Bombita, whose blood squirted in a horrible stream over his enemy, he stabbed like a madman time and again, thrusting the lusty steel into the blood-soaked back.
“Stop! Bombita, my little brave, you have conquered!” the patron said quietly.
Then came the most horrible thing of all. Bombita Chico, whose life-blood already covered the beaten man in a shroud of red, leaned with both hands upon the ground and lifted himself high; so high that from the wide gash in his body the yellow entrails crawled like a brood of loathsome snakes. He stretched his neck, lifted his head and, through the deep silence of the night, sounded his triumphant:
“Cock-a-doodle-doo!”
Then he sank down. This was his dying salute to life.

IT was as if a red mist of blood had suddenly enveloped my senses. I saw and heard no more. I sank into a purple, fathomless sea. Blood gushed into my ears and nose. I wanted to shout, but, when I opened my mouth, it filled with thick warm blood. I almost suffocated—but worse, much worse, was this sweet, obnoxious taste of blood upon my tongue. Then I felt a stabbing pain somewhere; but it took an eternity till I recognized the cause of the pain. I was biting on something, and it was the thing which I was biting that hurt me so. With an immense effort I wrenched my teeth apart.
When I took my finger from my mouth, I awoke. During the battle I had

gnawed off my fingernail down to the root, and now I had bitten into the quick.
The Andalusian touched my knee. “Do you want to settle your bets, *Caballero?”* he asked. I nodded. Then he figured out in many words what I had lost and won. All the spectators pressed around us; no one bothered about the corpses.
First, the money! The money!
I gave the fellow a handful of coins and asked him to settle for me. He figured it out, and in a hoarse voice arranged matters with everyone.
“Not enough, *caballero?”* he said at last. I realized that he was cheating me, but I only asked how much more I had to pay and gave him the money.
When he saw that I still had some in my pocket, he asked: *“Caballero,* don't you want to buy Bombita's knife? It brings luck—much luck!”
I bought the *navajo* for a ridiculous price. The Andalusian shoved it into my pocket.
Now nobody paid attention to me any longer. I rose, and staggered out into the night. My forefinger hurt; I wound my handkerchief around it. In long, deep draughts I drank in the fresh night air.
“Caballero!” somebody shouted. *“Caballero!”* I turned. One or the men came towards me. “The *patron* sends me, *caballero,”* he said. “Don't you want to take your friend home with you?”
Oh, yes—the Pope, the Pope! During all this time I hadn't seen anything, hadn't thought of anything.
I turned back again, passed through the cactus hedge. The shackled, bloody corpses were still on the ground. And over them bent the Pope, stroking with caressing hands the pitifully torn bodies. But I saw clearly that he did not touch the blood. Oh no! only in the air his hands moved to and fro. And I saw that they were the delicate, fine hands of a woman.
His lips moved. “Beautiful *salsa,”* he whispered, “beautiful red tomato-sauce!”
They had to tear him away by force; he did not want to give up the sight. He stammered and tottered uncertainly around on his thin legs.
“Too much booze!” one of the men said. But I knew: he had not touched one drop.
The patron took off his hat and the others followed his example.
“Vayan Ustedes con dios, caballeros!” they said.
When we reached the main road, the Pope followed me obediently. He took

my arm and murmured:
“Oh, so much blood! So much beautiful blood!”
He clung to me like so much lead. Painfully I dragged the drunken man towards the Alhambra. Under the Tower of the Princesses we stopped and sat down on a stone.
After a long while he said slowly:
“Oh, life! What wonderful things life gives us! It is a joy to live!”
An icy night wind wetted our temples. I shuddered. I could hear the Pope's teeth chattering; slowly his blood-intoxication evaporated.
“Shall we go, Reverend?” I asked.
Again I offered my arm.
He declined.
Silently we descended towards sleeping Granada.

The Spider

When the student of medicine, Richard Bracquemont, decided to move into room #7 of the small Hotel Stevens, Rue Alfred Stevens (Paris 6), three persons had already hanged themselves from the cross-bar of the window in that room on three successive Fridays.

The first was a Swiss traveling salesman. They found his corpse on Saturday evening. The doctor determined that the death must have occurred between five and six o'clock on Friday afternoon. The corpse hung on a strong hook that had been driven into the window's cross-bar to serve as a hanger for articles of clothing. The window was closed, and the dead man had used the curtain cord as a noose. Since the window was very low, he hung with his knees practically touching the floor-a sign of the great discipline the suicide must have exercised in carrying out his design. Later, it was learned that he was a married man, a father. He had been a man of a continually happy disposition; a man who had achieved a secure place in life. There was not one written word to be found that would have shed light on his suicide...not even a will.

Furthermore, none of his acquaintances could recall hearing anything at all from him that would have permitted anyone to predict his end.

The second case was not much different. The artist, Karl Krause, a high wire cyclist in the nearby Medrano Circus, moved into room ¹7 two days later. When he did not show up at Friday's performance, the director sent an employee to the hotel. There, he found Krause in the unlocked room hanging from the window cross-bar in circumstances exactly like those of the previous suicide. This death was as perplexing as the first. Krause was popular. He earned a very high salary, and had appeared to enjoy life at its fullest. Once again, there was no suicide note; no sinister hints. Krause's sole survivor was his mother to whom the son had regularly sent 300 marks on the first of the month.

For Madame Dubonnet, the owner of the small, cheap guesthouse whose clientele was composed almost completely of employees in a nearby Montmartre vaudeville theater, this second curious death in the same room had very unpleasant consequences. Already several of her guests had moved out, and other regular clients had not come back. She appealed for help to her personal friend, the inspector of police of the ninth precinct, who assured her that he would do everything in his power to help her. He pushed zealously ahead not only with the investigation into the grounds for the suicides of the two guests, but he also placed an officer in the mysterious room.

This man, Charles-Maria Chaumié, actually volunteered for the task. Chaumié was an old "Marsouin," a marine sergeant with eleven years of service, who had lain so many nights at posts in Tonkin and Annam, and had greeted so many stealthily creeping river pirates with a shot from his rifle that he seemed ideally suited to encounter the "ghost" that everyone on Rue Alfred Stevens was talking about.

From then on, each morning and each evening, Chaumié paid a brief visit to the police station to make his report, which, for the first few days, consisted only of his statement that he had not noticed anything unusual. On Wednesday evening, however, he hinted that he had found a clue.

Pressed to say more, he asked to be allowed more time before making any comment, since he was not sure that what he had discovered had any relationship to the two deaths, and he was afraid he might say something that would make him look foolish.

On Thursday, his behavior seemed a bit uncertain, but his mood was noticeably more serious. Still, he had nothing to report. On Friday morning, he came in very excited and spoke, half humorously, half seriously, of the strangely attractive power that his window had. He would not elaborate this notion and said that, in any case, it had nothing to do with the suicides; and that it would be ridiculous of him to say any more. When, on that same Friday, he failed to make his regular evening report, someone went to his room and found him hanging

from the cross-bar of the window.

All the circumstances, down to the minutest detail, were the same here as in the previous cases. Chaumié's legs dragged along the ground. The curtain cord had been used for a noose. The window was closed, the door to the room had not been locked and death had occurred at six o'clock. The dead man's mouth was wide open, and his tongue protruded from it.

Chaumié's death, the third in as many weeks in room #7, had the following consequences: all the guests, with the exception of a German high-school teacher in room #16, moved out. The teacher took advantage of the occasion to have his rent reduced by a third. The next day, Mary Garden, the famous Opéra Comique singer, drove up to the Hotel Stevens and paid two hundred francs for the red curtain cord, saying it would bring her luck. The story, small consolation for Madame Dubonnet, got into the papers.

If these events had occurred in summer, in July or August, Madame Dubonnet would have secured three times that price for her cord, but as it was in the middle of a troubled year, with elections, disorders in the Balkans, bank crashes in New York, the visit of the King and Queen of England, the result was that the affaire Rue Alfred Stevens was talked of less than it deserved to be. As for the newspaper accounts, they were brief, being essentially the police reports word for word.

These reports were all that Richard Bracquemont, the medical student, knew of the matter.

There was one detail about which he knew nothing because neither the police inspector nor any of the eyewitnesses had mentioned it to the press. It was only later, after what happened to the medical student, that anyone remembered that when the police removed Sergeant Charles-Maria Chaumié's body from the window cross-bar a large black spider crawled from the dead man's open mouth. A hotel porter flicked it away, exclaiming, "Ugh, another of those damned

creatures."

When in later investigations which concerned themselves mostly with Bracquemont the servant was interrogated, he said that he had seen a similar spider crawling on the Swiss traveling salesman's shoulder when his body was removed from the window cross-bar. But Richard Bracquemont
knew nothing of all this.

It was more than two weeks after the last suicide that Bracquemont moved into the room. It was a Sunday. Bracquemont conscientiously recorded everything that happened to him in his journal. That journal now follows.

Monday, February 28 I moved in yesterday evening. I unpacked my two wicker suitcases and straightened the room a little. Then I went to bed. I slept so soundly that it was nine o'clock the next morning before a knock at my door woke me. It was my hostess, bringing me breakfast herself. One could read her concern for me in the eggs, the bacon and the superb café au lait she brought me. I washed and dressed, then smoked a pipe as I watched the servant make up the room.

So, here I am. I know well that the situation may prove dangerous, but I think I may just be the one to solve the problem. If, once upon a time, Paris was worth a mass (conquest comes at a dearer rate these days), it is well worth risking my life pour un si bel enjeu. I have at least one chance to win, and I mean to risk it. As it is, I'm not the only one who has had this notion. Twenty-seven people have tried for access to the room. Some went to the police, some went directly to the hotel owner. There were even three women among the candidates. There was plenty of competition. No doubt the others are poor devils like me.

And yet, it was I who was chosen. Why? Because I was the only one who hinted that I had some plan-or the semblance of a plan. Naturally, I was bluffing.

These journal entries are intended for the police. I must say that it amuses me to tell those gentlemen how neatly I fooled them. If the Inspector has any sense, he'll say, "Hm. This Bracquemont is just the man we need." In any case, it doesn't matter what he'll say. The point is I'm here now, and I take it as a good sign that I've begun my task by bamboozling the police.

I had gone first to Madame Dubonnet, and it was she who sent me to the police. They put me off for a whole week-as they put off my rivals as well. Most of them gave up in disgust, having something better to do than hang around the musty squad room. The Inspector was beginning to get irritated at my tenacity. At last, he told me I was wasting my time. That the police had no use for bungling amateurs. "Ah, if only you had a plan. Then..."

On the spot, I announced that I had such a plan, though naturally I had no such thing. Still, I hinted that my plan was brilliant, but dangerous, that it might lead to the same end as that which had overtaken the police officer, Chaumié. Still, I promised to describe it to him if he would give me his word that he would personally put it into effect. He made excuses, claiming he was too busy but when he asked me to give him at least a hint of my plan, I saw that I had picqued his interest.

I rattled off some nonsense made up of whole cloth. God alone knows where it all came from.

I told him that six o'clock of a Friday is an occult hour. It is the last hour of the Jewish week; the hour when Christ disappeared from his tomb and descended into hell. That he would do well to remember that the three suicides had taken place at approximately that hour. That was all I could tell him just then, I said, but I pointed him to The Revelations of St. John.

The Inspector assumed the look of a man who understood all that I had been saying, then he asked me to come back that evening.

I returned, precisely on time, and noted a copy of the New Testament on the Inspector's desk. I had, in the meantime, been at the Revelations myself without however having understood a syllable. Perhaps the Inspector was cleverer than I. Very politely-nay-deferentially, he let me know that, despite my extremely vague intimations, he believed he grasped my line of thought and was ready to expedite my plan in every way.

And here, I must acknowledge that he has indeed been tremendously helpful. It was he who made the arrangement with the owner that I was to have anything I needed so long as I stayed in the room. The Inspector gave me a pistol and a police whistle, and he ordered the officers on the beat to pass through the Rue Alfred Stevens as often as possible, and to watch my window for any signal. Most important of all, he had a desk telephone installed which connects directly with the police station. Since the station is only four minutes away, I see no reason to be afraid.

Wednesday, March 1 Nothing has happened. Not yesterday. Not today.

Madame Dubonnet brought a new curtain cord from another room-the rooms are mostly empty, of course. Madame Dubonnet takes every opportunity to visit me, and each time she brings something with her. I have asked her to tell me again everything that happened here, but I have learned nothing new. She has her own opinion of the suicides. Her view is that the music hall artist, Krause, killed himself because of an unhappy love affair. During the last year that Krause lived in the hotel, a young woman had made frequent visits to him. These visits had stopped, just before his death. As for the Swiss gentleman, Madame Dubonnet confessed herself baffled. On the other hand, the death of the policeman was easy to explain. He had killed himself just to annoy her.

These are sad enough explanations, to be sure, but I let her babble on to take the edge off my boredom.

Thursday, March 3 Still nothing. The Inspector calls twice a day. Each time, I tell him that all is well. Apparently, these words do not reassure him.

I have taken out my medical books and I study, so that my self-imposed confinement will have some purpose.

Friday. March 4 I ate uncommonly well at noon. The landlady brought me half a bottle of champagne. It seemed a meal for a condemned man. Madame Dubonnet looked at me as if I were already three-quarters dead. As she was leaving, she begged me tearfully to come with her, fearing no doubt that I would hang myself 'just to annoy her.'

I studied the curtain cord once again. Would I hang myself with it? Certainly, I felt little desire to do so. The cord is stiff and rough-not the sort of cord one makes a noose of. One would need to be truly determined before one could imitate the others.

I am seated now at my table. At my left, the telephone. At my right, the revolver. I'm not frightened; but I am curious.

Six o'clock, the same evening Nothing has happened. I was about to add, "Unfortunately." The fatal hour has come-and has gone, like any six o'clock on any evening. I won't hide the fact that I occasionally felt a certain impulse to go to the window, but for a quite different reason than one might imagine.

The Inspector called me at least ten times between five and six o'clock. He was as impatient as I was. Madame Dubonnet, on the other hand, is happy. A week has passed without someone in #7 hanging himself. Marvelous.

Monday, March 7 I have a growing conviction that I will learn nothing; that the previous suicides are related to the circumstances surrounding the lives of the three men. I have asked the Inspector to investigate the cases further, convinced that someone will find their

motivations. As for me, I hope to stay here as long as possible. I may not conquer Paris here, but I live very well and I'm fattening up nicely. I'm also studying hard, and I am making real progress. There is another reason, too, that keeps me here.

Wednesday, March 9 So! I have taken one step more. Clarimonda.

I haven't yet said anything about Clarimonda. It is she who is my "third" reason for staying here. She is also the reason I was tempted to go to the window during the "fateful" hour last Friday. But of course, not to hang myself.

Clarimonda. Why do I call her that? I have no idea what her name is, but it ought to be Clarimonda. When finally I ask her name, I'm sure it will turn out to be Clarimonda.

I noticed her almost at once...in the very first days. She lives across the narrow street; and her window looks right into mine. She sits there, behind her curtains.

I ought to say that she noticed me before I saw her; and that she was obviously interested in me. And no wonder. The whole neighborhood knows I am here, and why. Madame Dubonnet has seen to that.

I am not of a particularly amorous disposition. In fact, my relations with women have been rather meager. When one comes from Verdun to Paris to study medicine, and has hardly money enough for three meals a day, one has something else to think about besides love. I am then not very experienced with women, and I may have begun my adventure with her stupidly. Never mind. It's exciting just the same.

At first, the idea of establishing some relationship with her simply did not occur to me. It was only that, since I was here to make observations, and, since there was nothing in the room to observe, I thought I might as well observe my neighbor-openly, professionally. Anyhow, one can't sit all day long just reading.

Clarimonda, I have concluded, lives alone in the small flat across the way. The flat has three windows, but she sits only before the window that looks into mine. She sits there, spinning on an old-fashioned spindle, such as my grandmother inherited from a great aunt. I had no idea anyone still used such spindles. Clarimonda's spindle is a lovely object. It appears to be made of ivory; and the thread she spins is of an exceptional fineness. She works all day behind her curtains, and stops spinning only as the sun goes down. Since darkness comes abruptly here in this narrow street and in this season of fogs, Clarimonda disappears from her place at five o'clock each evening.

I have never seen a light in her flat.

What does Clarimonda look like? I'm not quite sure. Her hair is black and wavy; her face pale.

Her nose is short and finely shaped with delicate nostrils that seem to quiver. Her lips, too, are pale: and when she smiles, it seems that her small teeth are as keen as those of some beast of prey.

Her eyelashes are long and dark; and her huge dark eyes have an intense glow. I guess all these details more than I know them. It is hard to see clearly through the curtains.

Something else: she always wears a black dress embroidered with a lilac motif; and black gloves, no doubt to protect her hands from the effects of her work. It is a curious sight: her delicate hands moving perpetually, swiftly grasping the thread, pulling it, releasing it, taking it up again; as if one were watching the indefatigable motions of an insect.

Our relationship? For the moment, still very superficial, though it feels deeper. It began with a sudden exchange of glances in which each of us noted the other. I must have pleased her, because one day she studied me a while longer, then smiled tentatively. Naturally, I smiled

back. In this fashion, two days went by, each of us smiling more frequently with the passage of time. Yet something kept me from greeting her directly.

Until today. This afternoon, I did it. And Clarimonda returned my greeting. It was done subtly enough, to be sure, but I saw her nod.

Thursday, March 10 Yesterday, I sat for a long time over my books, though I can't truthfully say that I studied much. I built castles in the air and dreamed of Clarimonda.

I slept fitfully.

This morning, when I approached my window, Clarimonda was already in her place. I waved, and she nodded back. She laughed and studied me for a long time.

I tried to read, but I felt much too uneasy. Instead, I sat down at my window and gazed at Clarimonda. She too had laid her work aside. Her hands were folded in her lap. I drew my curtain wider with the window cord, so that I might see better. At the same moment, Clarimonda did the same with the curtains at her window. We exchanged smiles.

We must have spent a full hour gazing at each other.

Finally, she took up her spinning.

Saturday, March 12 The days pass. I eat and drink. I sit at the desk. I light my pipe; I look down at my book but I don't read a word, though I try again and again. Then I go to the window where I wave to Clarimonda. She nods. We smile. We stare at each other for hours.

Yesterday afternoon, at six o'clock, I grew anxious. The twilight came early, bringing with it something like anguish. I sat at my desk. I waited until I was invaded by an irresistible need to go to the window-not to hang myself; but just to see Clarimonda. I sprang up and stood beside the curtain where it seemed to me I had never been able to

see so clearly, though it was already dark.

Clarimonda was spinning, but her eyes looked into mine. I felt myself strangely contented even as I experienced a light sensation of fear.

The telephone rang. It was the Inspector tearing me out of my trance with his idiotic questions.

I was furious.

This morning, the Inspector and Madame Dubonnet visited me. She is enchanted with how things are going. I have now lived for two weeks in room #7. The Inspector, however, does not feel he is getting results. I hinted mysteriously that I was on the trail of something most unusual.

The jackass took me at my word and fulfilled my dearest wish. I've been allowed to stay in the room for another week. God knows it isn't Madame Dubonnet's cooking or wine-cellar that keeps me here. How quickly one can be sated with such things. No. I want to stay because of the window Madame Dubonnet fears and hates. That beloved window that
shows me Clarimonda.

I have stared out of my window, trying to discover whether she ever leaves her room, but I've never seen her set foot on the street.

As for me, I have a large, comfortable armchair and a green shade over the lamp whose glow envelopes me in warmth. The Inspector has left me with a huge packet of fine tobacco-and yet I cannot work. I read two or three pages only to discover that I haven't understood a word. My eyes see the letters, but my brain refuses to make any sense of them. Absurd. As if my brain were posted: 'No Trespassing.' It is as if there were no room in my head for any other thought than the one: Clarimonda. I push my books away; I lean back deeply into my chair. I dream.

Sunday, March 13 This morning I watched a tiny drama while the servant was tidying my room. I was strolling in the corridor when I paused before a small window in which a large garden spider had her web.

Madame Dubonnet will not have it removed because she believes spiders bring luck, and she's had enough misfortunes in her house lately. Today, I saw a much smaller spider, a male, moving across the strong threads towards the middle of the web, but when his movements alerted the female, he drew back shyly to the edge of the web from which he made a second attempt to cross it. Finally, the female in the middle appeared attentive to his wooing, and stopped moving. The male tugged at a strand gently, then more strongly till the whole web shook. The female stayed motionless. The male moved quickly forward and the female received him quietly, calmly, giving herself over completely to his embraces. For a long minute, they hung together motionless at the center of the huge web.

Then I saw the male slowly extricating himself, one leg over the other. It was as if he wanted tactfully to leave his companion alone in the dream of love, but as he started away, the female, overwhelmed by a wild life, was after him, hunting him ruthlessly. The male let himself drop from a thread; the female followed, and for a while the lovers hung there, imitating a piece of art. Then they fell to the window-sill where the male, summoning all his strength, tried again to escape. Too late. The female already had him in her powerful grip, and was carrying him back to the center of the web. There, the place that had just served as the couch for their lascivious embraces took on quite another aspect. The lover wriggled, trying to escape from the female's wild embrace, but she was too much for him. It was not long before she had wrapped him completely in her thread, and he was helpless. Then she dug her sharp pincers into his body, and sucked full draughts of her young lover's blood. Finally, she detached herself from the pitiful and unrecognizable shell of his body and threw it out of her web.

So that is what love is like among these creatures. Well for me that I am not a spider.

Monday, March 14 I don't look at my books any longer. I spend my days at the window. When it is dark, Clarimonda is no longer there, but if I close my eyes, I continue to see her.

This journal has become something other than I intended. I've spoken about Madame Dubonnet, about the Inspector; about spiders and about Clarimonda. But I've said nothing about the discoveries I undertook to make. It can't be helped.

Tuesday, March 15 We have invented a strange game, Clarimonda and I. We play it all day long. I greet her; then she greets me. Then I tap my fingers on the windowpanes. The moment she sees me doing that, she too begins tapping. I wave to her; she waves back. I move my lips as if speaking to her; she does the same. I run my hand through my sleep-disheveled hair and instantly her hand is at her forehead. It is a child's game, and we both laugh over it. Actually, she doesn't laugh. She only smiles a gently contained smile. And I smile back in the same way.

The game is not as trivial as it seems. It's not as if we were grossly imitating each other-that would weary us both. Rather, we are communicating with each other. Sometimes, telepathically, it would seem, since Clarimonda follows my movements instantaneously almost before she has had time to see them. I find myself inventing new movements, or new combinations of movements, but each time she repeats them with disconcerting speed. Sometimes. I change the order of the movements to surprise her, making whole series of gestures as rapidly as possible; or I leave out some motions and weave in others, the way children play "Simon Says." What is amazing is that Clarimonda never once makes a mistake, no matter how quickly I change gestures.

That's how I spend my days...hut never for a moment do I feel that I'm killing time. It seems, on the contrary, that never in my life have I been better occupied.

Wednesday. March 16 Isn't it strange that it hasn't occurred to me

to put my relationship with Clarimonda on a more serious basis than these endless games. Last night, I thought about this...I can, of course, put on my hat and coat, walk down two flights of stairs, take five steps across the street and mount two flights to her door which is marked with a small sign that says "Clarimonda." Clarimonda what? I don't know. Something. Then I can knock and...

Up to this point I imagine everything very clearly, but I cannot see what should happen next. I know that the door opens. But then I stand before it, looking into a dark void. Clarimonda doesn't come. Nothing comes. Nothing is there, only the black, impenetrable dark.

Sometimes, it seems to me that there can be no other Clarimonda but the one I see in the window; the one who plays gesture-games with me. I cannot imagine a Clarimonda wearing a hat, or a dress other than her black dress with the lilac motif. Nor can I imagine a Clarimonda without black gloves. The very notion that I might encounter Clarimonda somewhere in the streets or in a restaurant eating, drinking or chatting is so improbable that it makes me laugh.

Sometimes I ask myself whether I love her. It's impossible to say, since I have never loved before. However, if the feeling that I have for Clarimonda is really-love, then love is something entirely different from anything I have seen among my friends or read about in novels.

It is hard for me to be sure of my feelings and harder still to think of anything that doesn't relate to Clarimonda or, what is more important, to our game. Undeniably, it is our game that concerns me. Nothing else-and this is what I understand least of all.

There is no doubt that I am drawn to Clarimonda, but with this attraction there is mingled another feeling, fear. No. That's not it either. Say rather a vague apprehension in the presence of the unknown. And this anxiety has a strangely voluptuous quality so that I am at the same time drawn to her even as I am repelled by her. It is as if I were moving in giant circles around her, sometimes coming close, sometimes

retreating...back and forth, back and forth.

Once, I am sure of it, it will happen, and I will join her.

Clarimonda sits at her window and spins her slender, eternally fine thread, making a strange cloth whose purpose I do not understand. I am amazed that she is able to keep from tangling her delicate thread. Hers is surely a remarkable design, containing mythical beasts and strange masks.

Thursday, March 17 I am curiously excited. I don't talk to people any more. I barely say "hello" to Madame Dubonnet or to the servant. I hardly give myself time to eat. All I can do is sit at the window and play the game with Clarimonda. It is an enthralling game. Overwhelming.

I have the feeling something will happen tomorrow.

Friday, March 18 Yes. Yes. Something will happen today. I tell myself-as loudly as I can--that that's why I am here. And yet, horribly enough, I am afraid. And in the fear that the same thing is going to happen to me as happened to my predecessors, there is strangely mingled another fear: a terror of Clarimonda. And I cannot separate the two fears.

I am frightened. I want to scream.

Six o'clock, evening I have my hat and coat on. Just a couple of words.

At five o'clock, I was at the end of my strength. I'm perfectly aware now that there is a relationship between my despair and the "sixth hour" that was so significant in the previous weeks. I no longer laugh at the trick I played the Inspector.

I was sitting at the window, trying with all my might to stay in my chair, but the window kept drawing me. I had to resume the game with

Clarimonda. And yet, the window horrified me. I saw the others hanging there: the Swiss traveling salesman, fat, with a thick neck and a grey stubbly beard; the thin artist; and the powerful police sergeant. I saw them, one after the other, hanging from the same hook, their mouths open, their tongues sticking out. And then, I saw myself among them.

Oh, this unspeakable fear. It was clear to me that it was provoked as much by Clarimonda as by the cross-bar and the horrible hook. May she pardon me...but it is the truth. In my terror, I keep seeing the three men hanging there, their legs dragging on the floor.

And yet, the fact is I had not felt the slightest desire to hang myself; nor was I afraid that I would want to do so. No, it was the window I feared; and Clarimonda. I was sure that something horrid was going to happen. Then I was overwhelmed by the need to go to the window-to stand before it. I had to...

The telephone rang. I picked up the receiver and before I could hear a word, I screamed, "Come. Come at once."

It was as if my shrill cry had in that instant dissipated the shadows from my soul. I grew calm.

I wiped the sweat from my forehead. I drank a glass of water. Then I considered what I should say to the Inspector when he arrived. Finally, I went to the window. I waved and smiled. And Clarimonda too waved and smiled.

Five minutes later, the Inspector was here. I told him that I was getting to the bottom of the matter, but I begged him not to question me just then. That very soon I would be in a position to make important revelations. Strangely enough, though I was lying to him. I myself had the feeling that I was telling the truth. Even now, against my will, I have that same conviction.

The Inspector could not help noticing my agitated state of mind,

especially since I apologized for my anguished cry over the telephone. Naturally, I tried to explain it to him, and yet I could not find a single reason to give for it. He said affectionately that there was no need ever to apologize to him; that he was always at my disposal; that that was his duty. It was better that he should come a dozen times to no effect rather than fail to be here when he was needed. He invited me to go out with him for the evening. It would be a distraction for me. It would do me good not to be alone for a while. I accepted the invitation though I was very reluctant to leave the room.

Saturday, March 19 We went to the Gaieté Rochechouart, La Cigale, and La Lune Rousse. The Inspector was right: It was good for me to get out and breathe the fresh air. At first, I had an uncomfortable feeling, as if I were doing something wrong; as if I were a deserter who had turned his back on the flag. But that soon went away. We drank a lot, laughed and chatted. This morning, when I went to my window, Clarimonda gave me what I thought was a look of reproach, though I may only have imagined it. How could she have known that I had gone out last night? In any case, the look lasted only for an instant, then she smiled again.

We played the game all day long.

Sunday, March 20 Only one thing to record: we played the game.

Monday, March 21 We played the game-all day long.

Tuesday, March 22 Yes, the game. We played it again. And nothing else. Nothing at all.

Sometimes I wonder what is happening to me? What is it I want? Where is all this leading? I know the answer: there is nothing else I want except what is happening. It is what I want...what I long for. This only.

Clarimonda and I have spoken with each other in the course of the last few days, but very briefly; scarcely a word. Sometimes we moved

our lips, but more often we just looked at each other with deep understanding.

I was right about Clarimonda's reproachful look because I went out with the Inspector last Friday. I asked her to forgive me. I said it was stupid of me, and spiteful to have gone. She forgave me, and I promised never to leave the window again. We kissed, pressing our lips against each of our windowpanes.

Wednesday, March 23 I know now that I love Clarimonda. That she has entered into the very fiber of my being. It may be that the loves of other men are different. But does there exist one head, one ear, one hand that is exactly like hundreds of millions of others? There are always differences, and it must be so with love. My love is strange, I know that, but is it any the less lovely because of that? Besides, my love makes me happy.

If only I were not so frightened. Sometimes my terror slumbers and I forget it for a few moments, then it wakes and does not leave me. The fear is like a poor mouse trying to escape the grip of a powerful serpent. Just wait a bit, poor sad terror. Very soon, the serpent love will devour you.

Thursday, March 24 I have made a discovery: I don't play with Clarimonda. She plays with me.

Last night, thinking as always about our game, I wrote down five new and intricate gesture patterns with which I intended to surprise Clarimonda today. I gave each gesture a number. Then I practiced the series, so I could do the motions as quickly as possible, forwards or backwards. Or sometimes only the even-numbered ones, sometimes the odd.
Or the first and the last of the five patterns. It was tiring work, but it made me happy and seemed to bring Clarimonda closer to me. I practiced for hours until I got all the motions down pat, like clockwork.

This morning, I went to the window. Clarimonda and I greeted each other, then our game began. Back and forth! It was incredible how quickly she understood what was to be done; how she kept pace with me.

There was a knock at the door. It was the servant bringing me my shoes. I took them. On my way back to the window, my eye chanced to fall on the slip of paper on which I had noted my gesture patterns. It was then that I understood: in the game just finished, I had not made use of a single one of my patterns.

I reeled back and had to hold on to the chair to keep from falling. It was unbelievable. I read the paper again-and again. It was still true: I had gone through a long series of gestures at the window, and not one of the patterns had been mine.

I had the feeling, once more, that I was standing before Clarimonda's wide open door, through which, though I stared. I could see nothing but a dark void. I knew, too, that if I chose to turn from that door now. I might be saved; and that I still had the power to leave. And yet, I did not leave---because I felt myself at the very edge of the mystery: as if I were holding the secret in my hands.

"Paris! You will conquer Paris," I thought. And in that instant, Paris was more powerful than Clarimonda.

I don't think about that any more. Now, I feel only love. Love, and a delicious terror.

Still, the moment itself endowed me with strength. I read my notes again, engraving the gestures on my mind. Then I went back to the window only to become aware that there was not one of my patterns that I wanted to use. Standing there, it occurred to me to rub the side of my nose; instead I found myself pressing my lips to the windowpane. I tried to drum with my fingers on the window sill; instead, I brushed my fingers through my hair. And so I understood that it was not that Clarimonda did what I did. Rather, my gestures followed her lead and

with such lightning rapidity that we seemed to be moving simultaneously. I, who had been so proud because I thought I had been influencing her, I was in fact being influenced by her. Her influence...so gentle...so delightful.

I have tried another experiment. I clenched my hands and put them in my pockets firmly intending not to move them one bit. Clarimonda raised her hand and, smiling at me, made a scolding gesture with her finger. I did not budge, and yet I could feel how my right hand wished to leave my pocket. I shoved my fingers against the lining, but against my will, my hand left the pocket; my arm rose into the air. In my turn, I made a scolding gesture with my finger and smiled.

It seemed to me that it was not I who was doing all this. It was a stranger whom I was watching.

But, of course, I was mistaken. It was I making the gesture, and the person watching me was the stranger; that very same stranger who, not long ago, was so sure that he was on the edge of a great discovery. In any case, it was not I.

Of what use to me is this discovery? I am here to do Clarimonda's will. Clarimonda, whom I love with an anguished heart.

Friday, March 25 I have cut the telephone cord. I have no wish to be continually disturbed by the idiotic inspector just as the mysterious hour arrives.

God. Why did I write that? Not a word of it is true. It is as if someone else were directing my pen.

But I want to...want to...to write the truth here...though it is costing me great effort. But I want to...once more...do what I want.

I have cut the telephone cord...ah...

Because I had to...there it is. Had to...

We stood at our windows this morning and played the game, which is now different from what it was yesterday. Clarimonda makes a movement and I resist it for as long as I can. Then I give in and do what she wants without further struggle. I can hardly express what a joy it is to be so conquered; to surrender entirely to her will.

We played. All at once, she stood up and walked back into her room, where I could not see her; she was so engulfed by the dark. Then she came back with a desk telephone, like mine, in her hands. She smiled and set the telephone on the window sill, after which she took a knife and cut the cord. Then I carried my telephone to the window where I cut the cord. After that, I returned my phone to its place.

That's how it happened...

I sit at my desk where I have been drinking tea the servant brought me. He has come for the empty teapot, and I ask him for the time, since my watch isn't running properly. He says it is five fifteen. Five fifteen...

I know that if I look out of my window, Clarimonda will be there making a gesture that I will have to imitate. I will look just the same. Clarimonda is there, smiling. If only I could turn my eyes away from hers.

Now she parts the curtain. She takes the cord. It is red, just like the cord in my window. She ties a noose and hangs the cord on the hook in the window cross--bar.

She sits down and smiles.

No. Fear is no longer what I feel. Rather, it is a sort of oppressive terror which I would not want to avoid for anything in the world. Its grip is irresistible, profoundly cruel, and voluptuous in its attraction.

I could go to the window, and do what she wants me to do, but I wait. I struggle. I resist though I feel a mounting fascination that becomes more intense each minute.

Here I am once more. Rashly, I went to the window where I did what Clarimonda wanted. I took the cord, tied a noose, and hung it on the hook...

Now, I want to see nothing else-except to stare at this paper. Because if I look. I know what she will do...now...at the sixth hour of the last day of the week. If I see her, I will have to do what she wants. Have to...

I won't see her...

I laugh. Loudly. No. I'm not laughing. Something is laughing in me, and I know why. It is because of my...I won't...

I won't, and yet I know very well that I have to...have to look at her. I must...must...and then...all that follows.

If I still wait, it is only to prolong this exquisite torture. Yes, that's it. This breathless anguish is my supreme delight. I write quickly, quickly...just so I can continue to sit here; so I can attenuate these seconds of pain.

Again, terror. Again. I know that I will look toward her. That I will stand up. That I will hang myself.

That doesn't frighten me. That is beautiful...even precious.

There is something else. What will happen afterwards? I don't know, but since my torment is so delicious. I feel...feel that something horrible must follow.

Think...think...Write something. Anything at all...to keep from

looking toward her...

My name...Richard Bracquemont. Richard Bracquemont...Richard Bracquemont...

Richard...

I can't...go on. I must...no...no...must look at her...Richard Bracquemont...no . .

. no more...Richard...Richard Bracque--. . .

The inspector of the ninth precinct, after repeated and vain efforts to telephone Richard, arrived at the Hotel Stevens at 6:05. He found the body of the student Richard Bracquemont hanging from the cross-bar of the window in room #7, in the same position as each of his three predecessors.

The expression on the student's face, however, was different, reflecting an appalling fear.

Bracquemont's eyes were wide open and bulging from their sockets. His lips were drawn into a rictus, and his jaws were clamped together. A huge black spider whose body was dotted with purple spots lay crushed and nearly bitten in two between his teeth.

On the table, there lay the student's journal. The inspector read it and went immediately to investigate the house across the street. What he learned was that the second floor of that building had not been lived in for many months.

THE END